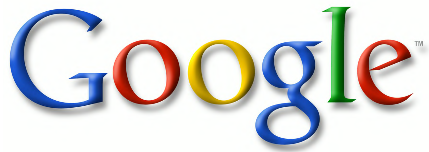

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TURNER THE ARTIST

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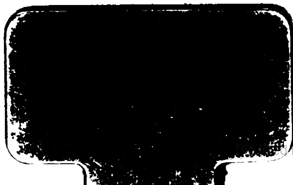

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J M W Turner

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THE WORLD'S WORKERS.

Turner the Artist.

BY THE

REV. S. A. SWAINE.

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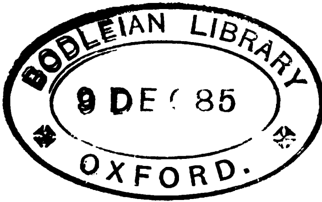

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TURNER THE ARTIST.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

ON a memorable morning—memorable in the history of English art—probably in the year 1780, an "artist in hair" might have been seen leaving his place of business in the gloomy neighbourhood of Maiden Lane, Southampton Street, London, on his way to the house of a wealthy customer named Tomkinson, who lived not far away. He was accompanied by his little boy, a child some five or six years old. The barber is a bustling man, as barbers generally are, and, as he hurries along, his little son trots bravely on at his side. It is not long before the house of the rich silversmith—for that is what Mr. Tomkinson is—is reached. While the father is busy with razor and curling-tongs, deftly carrying the keen blade over and around his patron's face, and frizzling his patron's wig, the son is busy with wide-open eyes, not watching the skilful operations of his father, for with them he is familiar enough, but taking note of everything

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uncommon or striking that the room contains. His attention is soon attracted by a coat of arms gorgeously emblazoned on vellum, and while his elders are probably deep in the politics of the day, he is engaged in making a copy of it, and specially of a certain lion *rampant* which has astonished and fascinated him. Whether the copy was now made on paper, or its appearance simply retained in the boy's mind to be carried home and reproduced there, matters little. The copy was made, and Mr. Tomkinson, who has a smattering taste for art, with an inclination to buy good drawings cheap and sell them dear, pronounces that the boy has talent, and will become, if he has the opportunity, an artist.

The prophecy thus uttered was at length abundantly fulfilled, for this little barber's boy was none other than Joseph Mallord William Turner, who became, as is now well known, the first of English landscape painters, if not the first landscape painter of the world.

Such was the starting point of the boy's art life. It was an emblazoned coat of arms, at sight of which budding genius burst forth. Soon afterwards he is seen copying drawings of the artists, Paul Sandby, Vandevelde, and others. Indeed, the last named artist seems to have exerted a strong determining influence upon the young painter. Years afterwards he and a friend were looking over some prints. "Ah! that," exclaimed Turner with emotion, "made me a

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painter." The print thus indicated was a green mezzo-tinto—a Vandevelde, representing a single large vessel running before the wind, and bearing up bravely against the waves. Probably this determined his genius towards marine painting, a department of art in which he excelled, as evinced in particular by his pieces, entitled respectively, "The Shipwreck," "Fighting Téméraire," and "The Slave Ship."

The earliest known drawing by Turner is one of Margate Church, executed when the artist was but nine years old. What education he had received up to this point must have been of the most meagre kind, as his father had been hitherto his chief, if not his only, instructor; but about this period he was sent to New Brentford for change of air, as his health was somewhat delicate, and here he went to his first school, where he distinguished himself—at least, among his school-fellows—by drawing cocks and hens on the walls. He also drew birds, flowers, and trees, as seen from the school-room windows, and it is related that the urchins around "sympathising with his taste, often did his sums for him, while he pursued the bent of his compelling genius."

It is said that the paternal Turner at first intended to make his son a barber like himself, but that being struck with his decided talent for drawing determined that he should follow his bent. This will account for William—for by that name and not by the first of his three Christian names, Turner seems to have

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been called in his youth—being sent, on leaving New Brentford, to "Mr. Palice, a floral drawing master," at an academy in Soho.

In 1788 he was removed to a school at Margate, carried on by a Mr. Coleman, and soon afterwards back to London to a school in Long Acre, kept by Mr. Thomas Malton, a perspective draughtsman. It was at this latter place that a trial befell him, which ought perhaps to be related here, as it is not without its moral to our youthful readers.

Turner's master soon discovered that his pupil had not the same love for the study of triangles and circles as he had for that of cocks and hens, and trees and flowers. The "Asses' Bridge,"—the name by which the fifth of the propositions of Euclid, as we scarcely need say, has come to be familiarly known—demanded a toll which the young hopeful could not pay. The elementary lines of geometrical drawing were a mere wiry cobweb of a world which he could not penetrate.

One day the desperate Malton shut up the books, and took the crestfallen boy back to the barber's shop in Maiden Lane.

"Mr. Turner," exclaims he, as he enters it, "it is of no use; the boy will never do anything; he is impenetrably dull, sir; it is throwing your money away; better make him a tinker, sir, or a cobbler, than a perspective artist."

But the desperate Malton was mistaken; the dull

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boy *did* do something; in the course of years he became *Professor of Perspective* in the Royal Academy, as well as an artist, of whom his native land is proud. Let the dull boys, and the dull girls, as they may be pronounced, take heart of grace. Their dulness in one direction may be but the reverse side of genius in another. Anyway, pains and perseverance will achieve wonders, as the story of Turner's life conspicuously shows.

"What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh." And, therefore, we are not surprised to find that the embryo Royal Academician and Professor of Perspective, has all this time been busy in his leisure hours making drawings, some of them copies of engravings, to be afterwards exhibited in his father's shop window, ticketed at a few shillings each. He was also employed in colouring prints for a print-seller and miniature-painter, by name, Mr. John Raphael Smith, by which a few shillings were honestly earned, and usefully, for such work educated him in neatness, care, and purity of colour.

It is said that in after times the little barber—both Turner and his father were little, that is to say, short, men—who was distinguished for his parsimony and meanness, used to boast that he had "given William a good edication." This has been rather laughed at, and the suggestion made that "he did not mean to deceive, but, after the wont of men, he had repeated the story so often, that he at last came to believe it himself."

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Yet, considering the number and kind of schools the boy was put to, no doubt, according to barber Turner's notions, he had received a good education, especially when it is remembered what the condition of education was in those days. It is true that to the end of his life the great artist could neither spell correctly, nor write grammatical English; but then many others, who presumably and professedly have received a good education, have in these two things been wofully weak. To the credit of father Turner, and as supporting his statement about his having given William a good education, it must now be recorded that having received a legacy of £200, he ungrudgingly paid it as a premium to an architectural draughtsman, to whom he articled his son, when the latter was about fourteen years of age.

There can be no question that Turner's genius was greatly quickened by friendly rivalry with another gifted boy of about his own age, named Thomas Girtin. Girtin was also employed by Mr. John Raphael Smith, and the lads were companions, and, indeed, close friends. He died at the early age of twenty-eight, to the great grief of Turner, who had the highest opinion of his talents, and was accustomed to say, "If Girtin had lived I should have starved." Some of the water-colour paintings of Girtin can be seen to-day in the South Kensington Galleries.

When about fifteen years of age Turner commenced to study at the Royal Academy. Here he

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drew the "Genius of the Vatican," and other subjects, making the most of his opportunities, and studying hard. It was about this time, too, soon after he became a student in the Academy, that he exhibited his "View of the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth." The Academy in those days, according to Mr. Ruskin, who, doubtless, has been a more profound student of the mind and works of Turner than any man living, or who has lived, was not the very best school possible for a young painter, especially of Turner's particular bent and genius. He says: "It taught Turner nothing, not even the one thing it might have done —the mechanical process of safe oil-painting, sure vehicles, and permanent colours. Turner, from the beginning, was led into constrained and unnatural error. Diligently debarred from every ordinary help to success, the one thing which the Academy ought to have taught him (barring the simple and safe use of oil colour) it never taught him; but it carefully repressed his perceptions of truth, his capacities of invention, and his tendencies of choice. For him, it was impossible to do right but in a spirit of defiance; and the first condition of his progress in learning was the power to forget."

Reference has been made to the way in which the window of the barber's shop in Maiden Lane was adorned by the drawings, exhibited for sale, of the boy-artist. These drawings secured for their author a friend and patron, to whose kindness he was much

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indebted—kindness, which he never forgot, or ceased to be grateful for. This was Dr. Munro, physician to George III., who, on making the acquaintance of the clever lad, gave him little commissions, and many a kind and useful word of encouragement. Many years afterwards, when his position and fame were established, the artist remarked one day, in conversation with a friend, "Girtin and I have often walked to Bushey and back to make drawings for good Dr. Munro at half-a-crown a-piece and a supper." On winter evenings the two lads were allowed by the doctor to come to his house in Adelphi Terrace, and spend an hour or two in sketching and colouring. This worthy doctor was a true lover of art, and possessed a valuable collection of paintings, among them being the "Search for Orlando," by Salvator Rosa; the "Condemnation of Haman," by Rembrandt; "A View of the Ponte Sesto," by Van Lint; "A Boy Picking Fruit," by Snyders; and "An Italian Landscape," by Zuccarelli. Here, too, were some of the works of Gainsborough, De Loutherbourg, Sandby, and Cozens, which the youthful artists had the advantage of carefully studying, and from which, doubtless, they learnt much. One likes to think of those winter evenings. The "good doctor" the worthy host deserved to be called. A kindly heart must have been his, and none can say how much the cause of English art owes to the benevolent patronage he bestowed on the famous subject of this sketch.

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The happiest period of Turner's life, we feel sure from a careful study of it, was his youth. Happier than when a great and famous man he must have been when taking those sketching excursions with Girtin on summer evenings, or on winter evenings working by the side of the same beloved friend in Dr. Munro's library, studying by day in the Royal Academy, or busily painting in his little bedroom in Maiden Lane, all the time dreaming of an absent love. Yes, Turner fell in love! The story of it is not very full or very clear, but, such as it is, it helps us to understand much in the artist's after life that was sad and blameworthy. It must not, therefore, be passed over here.

While still a boy the artist was smitten by the charms of the sister of a schoolfellow at Margate. The passion was not a transient one. When the school-boy has become a young man with a career opening before him, it possesses him with as much strength as ever. By the fair one it is not discouraged. Tradition says that in this case the course of true love ran smoothly enough up to a certain point. That point was Turner's leaving home, for some far away part of his native land, to sketch. Business was coming in briskly. He was getting commissions from the publishers, who employed him to make sketches for the illustration of works of history, topography, &c. When saying "good-bye" he promises to write frequently, and at no

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distant date to return and lead his betrothed to the altar. As a pledge he leaves her his portrait painted by his own hand. Alas! month after month goes by and no letter is received from him. Is it possible after such professions of love and constancy as he has made that he can prove false? Men have done such things. Still the forsaken girl, her love sadly chilled, hopes for the best. She hears occasionally in an indirect way of him through some newspaper recording his clever contributions to a London exhibition. This only serves to inflict a fresh pang of disappointment and make her tears flow anew. She is very wretched in her home: a step-mother rules there, and her rule is not kindly. At length, fully persuaded that her rambling artist-lover has been untrue, and, maybe, transferred his love to another; wishful, too, to escape from the tyranny of her step-mother, the harassed girl begins to listen to the proposals of another, who has been urging his suit. Believing herself to be free, and unable longer to resist embracing the opportunity of getting away from the home in which she was made daily to suffer so much persecution, she yields to her suitor's importunities, and promises him her hand. The day for the marriage is fixed, and preparations for its celebration are being made, when just a week before it took place Turner appears. He had written regularly, and notwithstanding that he had received no replies, his faith in the

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constancy of the young lady had remained unshaken. He now becomes acquainted with the state of affairs, and is fairly beside himself. He begs Miss —— to recede from the alliance she had engaged to make, but the lady considers that the matter has gone too far for her to do so with honour, and the marriage takes place. Not till afterwards was it discovered that the step-mother had intercepted the lovers' letters!

This unfortunate affair, without question, did Turner immense harm. He never married, and became, if not misanthropic, yet something very much like it. He had an enthusiasm for his art, it is true, a strong and burning enthusiasm for it, which lasted as long as life did; but he became an absorbed being, miserly, selfish. Alas! that of a man with so divine a genius such things should in faithfulness have to be said. He seems once afterwards to have thought of marriage, but never, so far as is known, went so far as to ask any other woman to be his wife. It was when he was forty years old that he appears to have taken a liking to the sister of a friend. In a letter to that friend, dated August 1, 1815, he writes —"If Miss —— would but waive bashfulness, or in other words, make an offer instead of expecting one, the same (namely, a house he had at Twickenham) might change occupiers." It was probably a good thing for the lady that she did not "waive bashfulness," and enter into such a union as Turner hinted at come about, for by this time his character and habits were

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pretty well formed, and they were not such as were calculated to make a refined woman happy. It may, however, with confidence be affirmed that if in his young manhood he had married a good sensible wife, and had had a happy home with children in it, those habits would never have been formed

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CHAPTER II.

ASSOCIATE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

It was a well-known saying of Sir Joshua Reynolds that "genius was nothing but well applied industry." This, no doubt, is too sweeping and unqualified. No industry, however well applied, will change the man of small parts and slender powers into a genius; but it may with equal truth be said, that the man of great parts and unusual powers seldom, or never, becomes known as such without industry and perseverance. The history of all famous men more or less strikingly bears this out. If genius must be called a "gift of Heaven" and a "light divine," it must also be said to be the "power of taking pains. The poet is right when he sings—

> "The lamp of genius, though by nature lit,
> If not protected, pruned and fed with care,
> Soon dies, or runs to waste, with fitful glare."

Turner was no exception to the rule. From his boyhood till old age came upon him, weakening

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his strength and slackening his powers, he worked hard and perseveringly. His youth knew few idle moments, and it was then that he acquired that knowledge of the rules of his art, and that skill in manipulation without which, whatever the richness and range of his imagination, he could not have become the great poet-painter he did.

During these early years when he was laying the foundations of his fame he was unceasingly busy, washing in skies for architects who employed him, making architectural drawings under the guidance of his master, studying at the Academy, painting pictures up in his bedroom, sketching with Girtin at Dr. Munro's in the winter, and out in the green fields, and along the banks of the Thames in the summer, and giving lessons first for a few shillings, then for half a guinea, and finally for a guinea, per lesson.

Let none of the youthful readers of this book settle down into the comfortable conviction, that if they are geniuses their genius will inevitably assert itself, and that what they may do, or fail to do, will have very little to do with it. After all, there is a great deal of truth in the saying of Sir Joshua, and much in Turner's life might be cited in support of it.

One marked characteristic of Turner was his secretiveness, and this he displayed from the first. Probably his disposition will in part explain his love for hiding himself, but it has been supposed that very early he had his secrets of manipulation, and, regard-

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ing these as a part of his stock in trade, was anxious not to disclose them. Certain it is that at this period the art of painting in water-colours very rapidly advanced, many improvements in execution being effected, and several ingenious artifices originated. The most important of these were due to the inventive genius of Turner.

"Girtin," says Mr. Thornbury,* "had introduced coarse paper; Varley had attained deeper tones; and Cozens had secured matchless simplicities and purity; but Turner, versatile, thoughtful, and inventive, discovered a hundred different means of obtaining new effects. Scratching and scraping he invented for himself, besides improving the inventions of others. He was the first to take out lights from masses of colour by means of bread, which startled and delighted his rivals and friends, when he exhibited works so treated; he used repeated washings, as Robson and others did later, to obtain a granulated surface; he stippled, as the cattle-painter, Hill, afterwards did, to excess."

"An Englishman's house is his castle," and young Turner seems to have regarded that little bedroom in Maiden Lane as his, guarding it most jealously. There is a story told of him, which is thoroughly characteristic. One morning he was busily employed

* The author is indebted to Mr. Walter Thornbury's "Life of Turner" for many of the facts recorded in this little volume.

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on some drawings, which a Mr. Britton had been commissioned to get executed for a nobleman, when the bedroom door opened and in walked the said Mr. Britton, in this instance Turner's employer. He came nominally to inquire how the drawings progressed, but really to spy out the artist's professional secrets. At once Turner covered up his pictures, and hastened to meet the intruder. "I've come to see the drawings for the Earl," said the visitor, "You shan't see 'em," was the reply. "Is that the answer which I am to take back to his lordship?" "Yes; and mind the next time you come through the shop, and not up the back way. I allow no one to come here." Herewith the irate artist closed the door on his visitor, and went back to growl at him over his work.

There is another story or two which, though they belong to a later period of Turner's life may well be told here, as they still further, and strikingly, illustrate the point referred to, and help to reveal to us the man.

The first is related by Mr. Trimmer, son of a close friend of Turner's, and shall be told in the narrator's own words. "Henry Howard, R.A.," says he, "was an early friend of my father's; and he and Turner have stayed with us at Heston. I remember when I was about five years old, going to Penn, in Buckinghamshire, with Howard, Turner, and my father. We went in a post-chaise. And, when tired,

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my father carried me pick-a-back. We came to a halt in a grove or copse, where luxuriated wild flowers in profusion. It was a charming day; and, though so many years bygone, I can see now vividly before me my father and Howard, both standing legs a-straddle, and Turner, at a little distance, in a ditch, all hard at work at the æsthetical. After awhile Turner emerged from his retreat with a capital water-colour, with which Howard and my father were in raptures. He said he got into the ditch to avoid the sun, but Howard whispered my father that it was to avoid showing his *modus operandi.*"

The next relates to a period when most of his great works were finished, and he had climbed to the very topmost rung, or nearly so, (he failed to secure the crowning honour of being elected President of the Royal Academy), of the ladder of his profession. It reveals to us the well-known and wealthy manufacturer, Mr. Gillott of Birmingham, determined at any price to obtain admission to Turner's house, which, by this time, had much of mystery about it, occupied as it was by no one but Turner himself, an old woman, who was his housekeeper, and her colony of cats, and guarded, as it was, most jealously against the intrusion of strangers.

In the full belief that with the golden key Mr. Gillott carried in his pocket he could open any door he arrived one day at Turner's. It was a dirty door; the house itself was dark and gloomy-looking; the

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windows looked as if they had not been cleaned for many a long day; and when the visitor pulled at the rusty bell-handle, there came an answering tinkle that was both querulous and melancholy.

After a long pause an old woman, having first of all looked up from the area, ascended slowly, and with great deliberation unfastened and opened the door. She snappishly asked the gentleman's business, and, when told, replied "Can't let 'e in." After this she slammed the door up, or rather, tried to do so, without success, for the crafty gentleman from Birmingham had slyly placed his foot inside, and so prevented the accomplishment of her purpose.

Mr. Gillott was not the man to be thwarted, and pushing past the feeble and enraged janitress, he hurried upstairs to the gallery, where so many of the artist's treasures were.

With the promptitude with which a spider emerges from his hiding-place, and springs upon his prey, Turner was out upon him. Mr. Gillott bowed, introduced himself, and said he had come to buy.

"Don't want to sell," or some such rebuff, was the answer; but the Birmingham gentleman closed his ears to all the angry vituperations of the bristling artist.

"Have you ever seen our Birmingham pictures, Mr. Turner?" he enquired, with unruffled placidity.

"Never heard of 'em," was the curt reply.

Mr. Gillott now drew from his pocket a fine crisp bundle of Birmingham bank notes, about £5,000 worth.

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"Mere paper," observed Turner, with grim humour, He was mollified somewhat, however, and evidently relished the joke.

"To be bartered for *mere* canvas," said Gillott, waving his hand towards some of the master-pieces on the walls. The retort, with its tone of cool depreciation, seemed still further to improve the temper of the owner of the "mere canvas," the value of which he himself knew so well how to appraise.

"You're a rum fellow," he exclaimed, evidently feeling that he had got his match; and, standing out no longer, he entered into negotiations, which resulted in the handsome collection of "Birmingham pictures" remaining with Turner, and some of the superb Turner pictures going to Birmingham.

But to come back to Turner's struggling days. About 1792 he received a commission from Mr. J. Walker, an engraver, to make drawings for a "*Copper-plate Magazine*" of his. Soon afterwards he got a similar commission from a Mr. Harrison, to furnish drawings for his "*Pocket Magazine*." These commissions sent him on his travels through England, and were the means of deepening within him that love for the scenery of his native land with which he had already been inspired by some of the sylvan scenes he had discovered a few miles out of London, and which he retained to the last, even after extensive and repeated travels on the continent. De Loutherbourg, who had studied the Alps, the Pyrenees, and his own

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Alsatian mountains and valleys, was the first foreign artist who had the courage and honesty to say, that "no English landscape painter needed foreign travel to collect grand prototypes for his study," and Turner was the first Englishman to illustrate it beyond question.

In order to execute Mr. Walker's commission Turner went west, and made a tour in Wales. The first public results of it were the drawing of "Chepstow" in *Walker's Magazine* for November, 1794, and three drawings in the Royal Academy that same year. By the next year's engravings and pictures he is to be traced to "Nottingham," "Bridgnorth," Matlock," "Birmingham," "Cambridge," "Lincoln," "Wrexham," "Peterborough," and "Shrewsbury." From his pictures of 1796 and 1797 we find that he had been to "Chester," "Neath," "Tunbridge," "Bath," "Staines," "Wallingford," "Windsor," "Ely," "Flint," "Hampton Court," "Herefordshire," "Salisbury," "Wolverhampton," "Llandilo," "The Isle of Wight," "Llandaff," and other places.

The first of his works in oil to be exhibited in the Royal Academy, was shown in 1797. It is called "Moonlight, a Study at Millbank," and is now in the National Gallery. "The picture," says a sympathetic and friendly critic, "is dull and heavy, and shows not the least sign of genius, yet it has always been a favourite with the writer . . . for its truth to nature for one thing. All the ordinary manufacturers

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of moonlights—and moonlights have been manufactured in deplorably large quantities for the market —represent the light of our satellite as a blue and cold light, whereas in nature, especially in the southern summer, it is often pleasantly rich and warm. Turner did not follow the usual recipe, but had the courage to make his moonlight warm, though he had not as yet the skill to express the ineffably mellow softness of the real warm moonlights in nature."

Soon after this he visited Yorkshire, the result of which was a fine display of pictures for 1798, a display which probably helped to procure for him election to an Associateship in the Royal Academy in 1799. Among the products of his northern tour were his "Morning on the Coniston Fells," and "Norham Castle on the Tweed." To this latter he acknowledged himself peculiarly indebted. Many years afterwards when he was making sketches for a work called "Provincial Antiquities," he, in company with Mr. Cadell, an Edinburgh bookseller, passed Norham. Turner took off his hat and made a low bow to the ruins.

"What are you about now?" exclaimed Cadell, as he observed this strange act of homage.

"Oh!" was the reply; "I made a drawing or painting of Norham several years since. It took, and from that day to this I have had as much to do as my hands could execute."

It was in this picture more, perhaps, than in any

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that had preceded it, certainly more strikingly, that Turner revealed his peculiar power in the treatment of light. The hill and ruin are in the middle distance, and appear as a dark mass against the rising sun, with boats, and cattle drinking in the foreground. The effect produced, as seen in a picture, was original, and the treatment unconventional, the result being that it could not fail to draw both attention and admiration.

These northern tours had also procured him the acquaintance of the Rev. Dr. Whitaker, vicar of the parish of Whalley, who employed him to make drawings for a book he was writing on the local antiquities, churches, seats of the county families, &c. He also came to know gentlemen who became his helpful patrons and firm friends, such as Mr. Fawkes, of Farnley Hall, whose guest in after years he frequently was, Lord Harewood, and Sir John Leicester, afterwards Lord de Tabley.

But the most important results of these tours were in the bracing of the painter's powers, and the development of his genius. They perfected his technical skill, partially displaced traditional notions of artistic composition, and stored his memory with infinite effects of Nature. Henceforth he is to be contemplated, as the toilsome student, indeed, for that he never ceased to be, but also as the triumphant master.

At Farnley Hall, Turner became a constant visitor, maintaining with its master a close and unbroken

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friendship down to the period of his death. It was while he was visiting here on one occasion that he had suggested to him his picture "Hannibal Crossing the Alps." Mr. Fawkes has thus described how it came about. "One stormy day at Farnley, Turner called to me loudly from the doorway, 'Hawkey! Hawkey! Come here! come here! Look at this thunderstorm. Isn't it grand? isn't it wonderful? isn't it sublime?' All this time he was making notes of its form and colour on the back of a letter. I proposed some better drawing-block, but he said it did very well. He was absorbed, he was entranced. There was the storm rolling, and sweeping, and shafting out its lightning over the Yorkshire hills. Presently the storm passed, and he finished. 'There, Hawkey!' said he. 'In two years you will see this again, and call it "Hannibal Crossing the Alps."

In the Farnley collection of drawings, by Turner, is a series representing a complete Rhenish tour. The series comprises some fifty odd drawings, and were bought by Mr. Fawkes of the artist for £500. One of the most beautiful, but saddest of all, is, "Twilight in the Lorelei," all grey and dim, but with just a speck of light here and there from the boats on the river.

After his friend's death Turner could never make up his mind, so sensitive was he, to visit Farnley again. But Mr. Fawkes's successor once brought the Rhine drawings to London for the purpose of shewing them to Turner. When they came to the grey

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Lorelei, tears sprang out of the old man's eyes; and glancing his hand over the faint light in the sky and water, as if he were working, he groaned, "But Hawkey! but Hawkey!" as much as to say—

> "When, ah! woful *when*,
> How far unlike the now and then."

CHAPTER III.

ROYAL ACADEMICIAN.

TO go into all the details of Turner's life is not the purpose of this book, which aims rather at giving a short, but comprehensive view of the great artist's career and character without entering into tedious particulars, or bewildering technicalities. There are many minor matters, therefore, relating to our subject which the writer will pass over without burdening his pages and trying his reader's patience by referring to them. A few facts, however, must be stated as being important, especially such as are connected with one of the greatest honours of the artist's life—his election as Royal Academician.

Reference was made in the preceding chapter to Turner being elected Associate of the Royal Academy in 1799. This was when he was twenty-four years of age, and must be regarded as a wonderful piece of good fortune. The right to a good and

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secure place on the Academy walls was thus given to him at a period when it was of the utmost importance to him. It is true that he had now fairly made good his claim to be considered a master in his art, but he was still a young and struggling man.

The Associateship was an encouragement and a stimulus, as well as a distinct advantage on account of the increased facilities it gave him for the exhibition of his pictures. It came like a favouring gale to a gallant ship which is making headway, indeed, but against opposing currents and in spite of many difficulties. The subject of Turner's diploma picture was "Dolbadern Castle," a simple round tower by the shore of the smaller of the two lakes of Llanberis, and within a short walk of Llanberis itself, at the foot of Snowdon.

Up to this period of his life Turner had known a good deal of what must have partaken of the character of drudgery. In his early days we have seen him colouring prints and washing in skies for architects, and then at work making architectural drawings. When this stage was past, and his skill as a draughtsman became known, he, for a period, was the devoted slave of engravers and publishers. No small part of his professional business as a young man was to make illustrations of towns, country seats, rural and coast scenes, &c., for their publications. This kind of work was now coming to an end. Not that it had been altogether bad, or, indeed, bad in any way

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for him. The training had been good, and, moreover, the work so done had supplied him with his living. Turner himself recognised the value of it, and when in after years his artist friends expressed their wonder that he should ever have passed through such drudgery for such small remuneration as he had received for it, he used to say, "Well! and what could have been better practice?"

The period, however, which commenced with his Associateship marked a change in this respect. He ceased almost entirely from making topographical drawings for the engravers, limiting his efforts to a few drawings for "Britannia Depicta," "Mawman's Tour," and some other books. Mere hack work he had fairly emancipated himself from, and was able to turn his attention to more congenial and ambitious labour. One other thing is to be noticed about this period, as Mr. Ruskin has pointed out. "Observe, generally," says he, "Turner never, after this time, 1800, drew from Nature without *composing*. His lightest pencil sketch was the plan of a picture, his completest study on the spot a part of one." He now begins to appear as the poet-painter. He dreams, and paints his dreams. Realism he begins to despise, or at least forsake, and to revel in idealism.

The observations which have just been made are illustrated by his picture of "Kilchurn Castle." This picture was exhibited in 1802, having been probably sketched by the artist about a year previously when

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on a visit to Scotland. The castle, as shown in it, has scarcely any points of resemblance to the castle as it actually exists. With the natural features, too, of the landscape he has taken almost as great liberties as with the ruin. The plain is made wavy where it is smooth, and the mountain, Ben Cruachan, behind it, which is insignificant and comparatively smooth, he makes towering and rugged. Several other points might be mentioned in which the picture differs, distinctly, and even widely so, from the scene it professes to represent. Turner's object was to make a picture, a beautiful, poetical picture, and not to paint a likeness; and so he imagined, and exaggerated, and even misrepresented to attain his object.

We have now hit upon, and the foregoing has fairly illustrated, one of the characteristics of Turner's art. He was a novelist, an author of fiction, the only difference between him and the novelist, ordinarily so-called, being that the one used the pen the other the brush. His "Bay of Baiae," with which visitors to the National Gallery are acquainted, is a highly-idealized picture. In regard to it, a very good story has come down to us. The artist's friend, Mr. Jones, was one day discussing it with a traveller who had recently been there, and was surprised to find that half of it was sheer invention. Upon this he playfully wrote upon the frame, *Splendide Mendax*. Turner did not know much of Latin, but he knew enough to understand that this signified "a splendid lie." When

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the inscription caught his eye he only laughed; and when his friend protested that where he had planted some hills and vineyards there was nothing in reality but a few dry sticks, he observed with a smile that "all poets are liars."

Is this assertion true? Everybody knows that all poets are dreamers and idealizers, and nobody expects to find in them the accuracy of the historian. The novelist, too, even when he takes a historical subject, as Sir Walter Scott was so fond of doing, is allowed and expected to draw largely upon his imagination. He is known and accepted as a writer of fiction. But it is not altogether so with the painter. He may be, and sometimes should shew himself to be, the poet and the idealist; he may paint fictitious pictures, and may even paint "fiction founded on fact;" but he should avow it. A "composition" should be called a composition, and not delivered to the public as the representation of a fact. An old and successful painter is reported to have said, "If I paint a landscape, and call it a composition, people are not satisfied, and think it too artificial, because they are aware it is composed; but if I call the same picture by the name of some place that they can find on the map, they are satisfied and look upon it with perfect good faith as a true representation of Nature." That is, the buying public like realism in a picture that professes to be a likeness. They like it to be what it professes to be. But the painters do not; they like

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to idealize, whether they paint a landscape or the portrait of a person.

It has been said that every French private carries a marshal's *bâton* in his knapsack, and dreams of the time when he is to wield it; and it is to be presumed that every young artist, knowing that the possibility is open to him of attaining to the highest honours of his profession, dreams of the time when he shall be able to write the magic letters R.A. after his name. That, however, is only for the elect few. The honour of R.A. came to Turner in 1802, when he was only twenty-seven years old. It was one which, no doubt, he coveted and sought, but sought only by seeking to make himself worthy of it. After his election, such was his meagre sense of obligation to those who had conferred it, that he refused to go and thank them, as was the custom.

"If they had not been satisfied with my pictures," said he, "they would not have elected me. Why then should I thank them? Why thank a man for performing a simple duty?"

He forgot, however, that good breeding oftentimes demands of us that which duty or obligation, in his strictly interpreted sense of the word, does not.

During all this time, of course, the artist's circumstances had been improving, and this is indicated by the changes which he made from time to time in his place of residence. The first change was made as early as 1796, when he was twenty-one. He in that

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year removed from his somewhat confined quarters in his father's house into rooms of his own in the same street. In 1800, soon after becoming an Associate of the Royal Academy, he went to live in Harley Street, and either in that year, or the following, he removed to 75, Norton Street, Fitzroy Square.

About this time he removed his father from the barber's shop in Maiden Lane, and took him into his own house. The barber's trade had been already undermined by the simple Republican manners of the Revolution, and the powder tax that the Tories imposed in 1795, drove out the wigs, and seems to have given the perruquier his final *coup*. Perhaps, Turner, senior, was induced, or compelled, to leave Maiden Lane on account of declining business; but more probably it was on account of the desire of "Billy," as he called his son, to have his father near him during his declining years. His wife, Turner's mother, had some time before become insane.

Turner's relations with his father, whom he invariably called "Dad," were always of a very close and affectionate character. The father was proud of his gifted son, and helped him in everything he could; while the son on his part was filial and dutiful to the last. The old man used to stretch canvases for his son, and, when those canvases had been covered with beautiful art-creations, varnish them. On this account Turner was accustomed to say that his father began and finished his pictures for him.

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CHAPTER IV.

TURNER'S RIVALRY OF CLAUDE.

IT would seem that up to the period of his being elected a Royal Academician, Turner had not been out of his native country, and knew nothing of continental scenery from actual observation of it. However, immediately after the first exhibition, in which he had borne the full honours of the Academy, he went to France. His first impression of France appears to have suggested the "Calais Pier, with French Poissards Preparing for Sea—An English Packet Arriving." This picture is a very strong one, and has been described as "the first manifestation of the full energy there was in Turner's genius." It is now the property of the nation, and may be seen in the National Gallery.

Another important picture which we owe to this tour is "The Festival upon the Opening of the Vintage of Maçon." Concerning this it has been said by a capable critic, "As the sense of power had revealed itself in the 'Calais Pier,' so the sense of beauty had its satisfactions in the 'Maçon Vintage.' It is a graceful composition full of the sentiment which we call classic, with its noble river-divided landscape, its elegant trees, its pleasant slopes of land and joyous animated figures. From France he passed over into

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Switzerland, and revelled, as can readily be understood, in the sublime mountain scenery to be seen there, bringing away when he returned home numerous sketches, and new ideas, which afterwards were to be transferred to canvas.

The first engraving ever made from an oil painting of Turner's was published in 1805. The subject was taken from Sir John Leicester's "Shipwreck," and the prospectus was as follows :—

"Proposal for publishing by subscription, with permission of Sir John Leicester, Bart., a print from that celebrated picture of

'A SHIPWRECK,'
with boat endeavouring to save the crew.
BY J. M. W. TURNER, ESQ., R.A.

To be seen at his gallery, No. 64, Harley Street, until July 1, 1805 ; and after at No. 50, Warren Street, Fitzroy Square. To be engraved in mezzotinto by C. Turner. Size of the plate will be 33 inches by 23½ inches. Prints, £2 2s. ; proofs, £4 4s. Those in colours to be under the direction of the artist. Half of the money to be paid on subscribing, and the other half on delivery, which will be in December next, 1805.

"C. Turner has the pleasure to inform his friends, as it will be the first engraving ever presented to the public from any of Mr. W. Turner's pictures, the print will be finished in a superior style; and as only fifty proofs will be taken, gentlemen desirous of fine impressions are requested to be early in their application, as they will be delivered in order as subscribed for.

"Subscriptions received by the engraver, No. 50, Warren Street, Fitzroy Square."

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This engraving, without doubt, marks an epoch in Turner's art life, both in relation to art itself, and in relation to the art-loving public. It certainly seems to mark the commencement of that period of his life when most of his best work was done.

His "Goddess of Discord choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of Hesperides," was exhibited at the British Institution in 1806. The "Sun Rising in a Mist," was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1807. Both of these fine pictures are now in the National Gallery, and are among its choicest treasures.

The last-mentioned picture is remarkable on one or two accounts. It is the first decided expression on any great scale of Turner's master passion in his art. This was the love of light and mystery in combination. Let this be remembered, for it is important. Then it reveals how early in his career Turner had become possessed of the ambition to rival the great French landscape-painter Claude. There it hangs beside Claude's "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca." selected by himself as one of his two great competition pictures, and by it, and "Dido Building Carthage," which hangs beside another Claude, the "Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba," he deliberately determined to appeal to posterity to judge between him and the Frenchman.

It was in the year 1807, in which the "Sun Rising in a Mist" was exhibited, that he commenced another

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great work in rivalry of Claude. This was his "Liber Studiorum," in which he intended to pit not only his skill, but his style and range of art against Claude's. The work of Claude, which this production of his was intended to rival, was the "Liber Veritatis." The high opinion which Turner had of his own powers, and the intensely ambitious character of his mind are revealed to us in this project. He was little over thirty years of age, and yet he determines to build himself a monument, "so devised and so entitled that no instructed person shall ever be able either to see it, or hear of it, without thinking of Claude's 'Liber Veritatis.' . . . The suggestion of Claude's title is so exact that it is imitated, not only in the language and grammatical form, but even in the number of syllables."

In his advertisement of it Turner thus describes the intention of the work: "Intended as an illustration of landscape composition, classed as follows: Historical, mountainous, pastoral, marine, and architectural." It extended to ninety plates, twenty of which were not published. In these, if he did not exhaust Nature, he may be fairly said to have exhausted all that was then known of landscape art. The first part appeared, as has already been intimated, in 1807, and the last appeared in 1816, so that it continued through some nine years. It was not exactly a success, and this fact is now regarded as a severe reflection on the public taste at that time.

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But the fault largely lay with Turner, who in order to get as large a share of the proceeds as possible into his own pocket, determined to print, publish, and sell the work himself. No doubt the artist had good reason for feeling that fifty per cent. of the money, which the public might be disposed to spend upon his engravings, was too large a proportion to go to the wholesale and retail printsellers; but then these tradesmen can find purchasers where the artist cannot, and the result of publishing through the trade is usually better for the artist in the end. As it was, Turner overreached himself, and spoiled the commercial chances of his publication, by the way in which he brought it out.

Mr. Monkhouse, a critic of Turner and his works, says: "Amongst his more obvious claims to the first place among landscape artists, are his power of rendering atmospherical effects, and the structure and growth of things. He not only knew how a tree looked, but he showed how it grew. Others may have drawn foliage with more habitual fidelity, but none ever drew trunks and branches with such knowledge of their inner life. . . . . Although the trees of the 'Liber' are not of equal merit, (Mr. Ruskin says the firs are not good), this quality may be observed in many of the plates. Others have drawn the appearance of clouds, but Turner knew how they formed; others have drawn rocks, but he could give their structure, consistency, and quality of

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surface, with a few deft lines and a wash; others could hide things in a mist, but he could reveal things through a mist; others could make something like a rainbow, but he, almost alone, and without colour, could show it standing out, a bow of light arrested by vapour in mid-air, not flat upon a mountain, or printed on a cloud. If all his power over atmospheric effects, and all his knowledge of structure are not contained in the 'Liber,' there is sufficient proof of them scattered through its plates to do as much justice to them as black and white will allow. If we want to know the result of his studies of architecture we see it there also: little knowledge or care of buildings for their own sakes, but perfect sense of their value pictorially for breaking of lights and casting of shadows; for contrast with the undefined beauty of natural forms, and for masses in composition; for the sentiment that ruins lend, and for the names which they give to pictures." This, on the whole, is very judicious; indeed, it may be said that in these exquisite studies the artist has gone up and down the entire gamut of art, and shewn us how unusual, how versatile, and magical were his powers. Of course, all the plates are not of equal value, but some of them are of greater value as works of art than many of his large works, such, for example, as "The Little Devil's Bridge," and "Solway Moss."

The first engraver that Turner employed for the "Liber" was Mr. F. C. Lewis, described as "the best

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aquatint engraver of the day, who, at the very time, was at work on facsimiles of Claude's drawings." It was agreed that Turner should etch, and Lewis aquatint, at five guineas a plate. The "Bridge and Goats" was the first plate to be finished. In the second, Turner gave Lewis the option of etching as well as aquatinting, and the latter accordingly etched, raising his charge from five to eight guineas in consideration of the extra work. We should say that the claim for increased pay for increased labour was reasonable and just, but apparently Turner did not think so, for he refused to have the plate engraved, and sought a new engraver. In such transactions as these, what has been called "the grasping spirit of the little tradesman," possessed by the great artist, comes out. A well-known millionaire, lately deceased, it has been said, would haggle with a cabman about sixpence, and Turner was a man of similar meanness, making him not one of the most pleasant of persons to have to do business with.

The next engraver to be employed on the "Liber" was Mr. Charles Turner, but his connection also ended, after twenty plates had been finished, in consequence of a quarrel about his charges. After this, various engravers were employed, the painter himself engraving some of his own drawings and etchings. In the meantime the print-sellers, to whom Turner would not allow the exorbitant profits they demanded, would have nothing whatever to do with

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the publication. It did not enter their heads, or probably they would not have been so uncompromising in their claims, that the day would come, and that it was not so very far off either, when a single set would be worth £3,000, and a single unpublished plate would sell for £20.

Turner's notes on the engravers' proofs, indicating corrections, additions, &c., are interesting on many accounts. They reveal something of his mind, temper, and faculty as a critic. On the "Morpeth," for instance, he wrote, "I think the whole sky would be better a tone lighter, besides the light clouds." The reason for this, which also he gave, was, that it would "make the hill more solid." Upon a touched proof of the "Little Devil's Bridge" he wrote: "A slight indication of a ray of bursting light under the bridge would improve that part, and a few sharp white touches upon the leaves marked X, *because they are now two black spots without connection with the stems of the trees.*" These, and other citations which might be made, show that Turner possessed not only the eye of the artist, but the acumen of the critic, and that he exercised it on his own works and the engravings made from them. Another example may be given, which not only reveals Turner's quickness to detect the manner of the engraver's manipulation of his plate, but his polite severity in criticising it. Charles Turner, who engraved the "Dunstanborough Castle," permitted himself the facility of a little aqua-

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tint. This was at once observed by the painter, who wrote, "Sir, you have done in aquatint all the castle down to the rocks; did I ever ask for such an indulgence?" This might well be compared with some of the best of the Duke of Wellington's laconic reproofs.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER SUCCESS AND HONOURS.

THE irony of events is a subject that the writer of history and biography has frequently to notice. The life of Turner affords at least one striking illustration of it. In the opening chapter of this book has been told the story of the humiliation which came upon the budding artist, when the desperate Mr. Malton the "perspective draughtsman," to whom he had been committed for instruction took him back to his father, and told him that the son on whom his fond hopes were fixed was "impenetrably dull," and that he had "better make him a tinker, or a cobbler, than a perspective artist." One wonders what the teacher would have said if he had then been told that the pupil concerning whom he so utterly despaired would one day be Professor of Perspective in the Royal Academy. He would probably have refused absolutely to believe any such thing. Yet this came to pass in the year 1808.

How the Academicians came to elect Turner to this professorship cannot now be said. It can

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scarcely be believed that he was the most suitable of then living men for it. Perspective certainly was not a strong point with him, and he was most deficient in teaching power. In one way he took great pains to justify the wisdom of the choice, as is witnessed to by Mr. Ruskin, who says, "The zealous care with which Turner endeavoured to do his duty is proved by a large existing series of drawings, exquisitely tinted, and often completed, coloured all by his own hand, of the most difficult perspective subjects—illustrating not only directions of line but effects of light—with a care and completion, which put the work of any ordinary teacher to utter shame."

But the professor lacked the gift of imparting knowledge which is so essential to a teacher. Moreover, as a speaker he was most confused. His speeches at the Academy are thus described: "You saw the great man's mouth move, and imperfectly heard certain sounds proceed therefrom; but out of these you seldom caught more than 'Mr. President,' and 'namely,' the two verbal forms to which the speaker had recourse when he had hopelessly entangled himself in the subtleties of his own rhetoric. To add to all this mumbling confusion . . . . the bells of St. Martin's used to break in, merrily and mischievously, with their one, two—three, four—five, six—seven, eight—two, three—two, four—five, seven—six, eight; and then came a lull, through which you heard again 'Mr. President,' and 'namely.'"

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As the professor was so deficient in language it is not surprising that he committed his thoughts a good deal to writing, reading parts, and sometimes the whole of his lecture from the manuscript. This plan, however, had its drawbacks and disadvantages, as on a memorable occasion he found. The hour had come for the lecture, and the professor, entering the room, mounted his desk. The buzz of students' voices subsided, note books were arranged, and every one turned towards the lecturer and his black-board. But meanwhile the professor betrays signs of trepidation and confusion, as he dives now into one pocket and presently into another. It is not long before he begins his lecture, but what he says is, "Gentlemen, I have been and left my lecture in the Hackney coach." The lecture, extemporaneously delivered, was not a lengthy one that morning!

The Academy had been kind to Turner, and he loved it and was grateful to it in consequence in spite of what he had said when he was made an R.A. To his last days he cherished the closest relations with it, and did what he could to honour it, and advance its interests. Those who did otherwise he did not feel very friendly towards, especially if they had been the recipients of benefits from it. Illustrative of this feeling of his a story has come down to us of the extraordinary reply he made when informed that a brother artist known to him, who had made some attacks on the institution, had perished by his own

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hand. The imagination of the narrator, Maclise, was roused to the utmost by the suddenness and ghastliness of the occurrence. To his surprise, however, Turner, on being told of it, scarcely ceased his painting, merely growling out between his teeth "He stabbed his mother; he stabbed his mother." "Good Heavens!" said Maclise, so excited that he was prepared for any new horror. "You don't mean to say, Turner, that ——— ever committed a crime so horrible?" Turner simply repeated in deep slow tones, "He stabbed his mother; he stabbed his mother." It was not till Maclise reached home that it dawned upon him that this was a figurative allusion to the ingratitude of the deceased artist in attacking the Academy which had educated him.

To the body, which in the early part of his career recognised his genius, and bestowed its honours upon him, at length making him one of its professed art teachers, he maintained a steady fidelity to the end. His relations with the Academy certainly present to us one of the most pleasing aspects of his confessedly defective character.

Having received such an accession of dignity and income as accrued from his appointment to a professorial chair in the Royal Academy, Turner indulged in the luxury of a country house. This was situated in the Upper Mall, Hammersmith, and would scarcely be considered in the country now. It overlooked the Thames, which had always a peculiar

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fascination for the artist. It is surmised, too, that he wished to be near the German artist De Loutherbourg, whose house was at Hammersmith, and whose daring effects of fire and tempest Turner much admired. The latter was very chary of letting out his own art secrets, but he was not too proud to learn of any one, and was constantly on the watch that he might add to his own knowledge and skill. Mrs. De Loutherbourg, however, grew very jealous of the frequent visits of the young painter—for Turner was at this time (1808) a comparatively young man—and at last, suspecting, probably with truth, that he was worming all her husband's secrets out of him, she shut the door in his face, and refused him admittance.

The following, written by one whose father was a friend of Turner's, gives us just a peep at the artist, and his life at Hammersmith: "At the beginning of the century Turner had a place at Hammersmith Mall. The garden, which ran down to the river, terminated in a summer-house; and here, out in the open air were painted some of his best pictures. It was here that my father, who then resided at Kew, became first acquainted with him; and expressing his surprise that Turner could paint under such circumstances, he remarked that lights and rooms were absurdities, and that a picture could be painted anywhere. His eyes were remarkably strong. He would throw down his water-colour drawings on the floor of the summer-house, requesting my father not

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to touch them, as he could see them there, and they would be drying at the same time."

It was at the time of Turner's removal to Hammersmith that he became acquainted with Lord Egremont, who was his steady friend and patron till death. In 1809 he visited his lordship at Petworth for the first time. Lord Egremont had a refined perception of artistic beauty, and it redounds to his credit that he was among the very few members of the English aristocracy who were able to appreciate either Turner or other distinguished contemporary artists. The name of Virgil's friend and patron, Mæcenas, will live as long as that of the poet himself; and it so happens that the name of Lord Egremont, on account of his lordship's kindness to men of genius, whose names are immortal in connection with English art, has become immortal too.

"The contemplative man's recreation," angling, Turner was very fond of; indeed, he was an ardent disciple of the amiable Isaak Walton. Whenever he went on a visit to a friend in the country, a fishing-rod was invariably bound up with his pilgrim's staff and the inevitable umbrella. He was an intensely persevering and patient fisherman too. No bad weather could drive him from his post, or exhaust his patience. A son of his friend, Mr. Trimmer, has given to us a graphic picture of Turner sitting on the lawn, and fishing in a pond for carp. The day was a most dreary one, the rain descending in incessant

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torrents. But the indomitable fisherman mitigated its severities by adopting a kitchen chair for his seat, and a board for resting his feet on. With one hand he held his rod, and with the other a huge umbrella, by means of which he endeavoured to shelter himself from the pitiless rain. Thus equipped, he sat with the quiet fortitude of a hero till the bell rang and summoned him to dinner.

Turner was as merciful an angler as even the pious and humane father of the craft could have desired. He would impale the devoted worm "as tenderly as if he loved him," and entertained a due considerateness towards the finny objects of his pursuit. One of his friends, who was frequently his angling companion, says:—

"I was often with him when fishing at Petworth, and also on the banks of the Thames, when we were making our annual visit to Sir J. Wyattville at Windsor Castle. His success as an angler was great, although with the worst tackle in the world. Every fish he caught he showed to me, and appealed to me to decide whether the size justified him to keep it for the table, or return it to the river; his hesitation was often most touching, and he always gave the prisoner at the bar the benefit of the doubt."

"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," say the Scriptures, and certainly the way in which a man treats his inferior fellow-creatures is an index to his heart. Real goodness of nature is frequently

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revealed in a love of animals, pity for their sufferings, and concern for their needs. So impressed with this was the gentle and truly Christian Cowper that he wrote:

> "I would not enter on my list of friends
> (Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
> Yet wanting sensibility) the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

Such sensitiveness some might call morbid, but we prefer to call it humane. The man who regulates even his fishing pursuits with mercy, as did Turner, would, we venture to say, call it so too.

Turner was fond of animals. At Twickenham he was known among the boys as "Old Blackbirdy," because he would not let them take birds' nests in his garden hedges. He loved to hear the scraps of music which Nature had taught the little black choristers, and jealously protected them from the depredations of their juvenile foes of human kind. The same feature of his character appears in the fact that his house in Queen Anne Street was full, so it is said, of tailless Manx cats.

At Petworth he was in his glory, and was wont to indulge himself with his favourite sport to such an extent that other guests imagined he led an idle life. But like Sir Walter Scott, who would do a good day's work before breakfast and then devote the rest of the day to his guests and recreations, he would rise, do all that he considered duty under the circumstances claimed,

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and then devote himself to amusement. In the quiet and privacy of those early hours of the morning he was able to get through a great deal of work, for he was always a rapid worker. In 1810, the year following this visit, he exhibited "Petworth, Sussex, the seat of the Earl of Egremont: *Dewy Morning.*"

On one occasion, when Turner was visiting at Petworth, a discussion arose between him and Lord Egremont as to whether carrots floated when placed in the water, or not. His lordship maintained that they did not, and Turner maintained that they did. To settle the matter, the former rang the bell, and sent for a bucket of water and some carrots, in the full conviction that he was right and would be able to indulge in a little friendly triumph over the distinguished artist, his guest. The water was brought, and the carrots thrown in, when it was shown that the peer had judged wrongly, and the artist rightly, as to the specific gravity of the vegetable in question. It is quite possible that Turner had made a demonstration of the fact before, especially if, as has been supposed, he had introduced carrots in one of his Petworth pictures. Or he might accidentally have observed it at some time, and have stored the fact up in his memory.

In 1812 Turner removed from Harley Street to Queen Anne Street, West. Here he had, besides his studio, a gallery for the private exhibition of his pictures. In the same year, too, he took an excursion

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to Devonshire—an excursion that was not without its influence upon his art. Here he met Mr. Cyrus Redding, who in his "Past Celebrities" has given us some interesting reminiscences of the artist, and his visit on this occasion to the West. Mr. Redding thus describes him and his mode of sketching at this time: "The unprepossessing exterior, the reserve, the austerity of language, existed in Turner, in combination with a powerful, intelligent, reflective mind, ever coiled up within itself; he had a faculty of vision that seemed to penetrate the sources of natural effect, however various in aspect, and to store them in memory with wonderful felicity. His glance commanded in an instant all that was novel in scenery, and a few outlines on paper recorded it intelligibly to others. He placed these pictorial memoranda on millboard, not larger than a sheet of letter-paper, quite a confused mass. How he worked out the details from such sketches seemed to me wonderful. His views around Plymouth, in the engravings from his pictures, were marvellously varied in effect, as well as faithful representations. His first sketches showed little of the after picture to the unpractised eye; perhaps he bore much away in memory, and these were only a kind of shorthand, which he deciphered in his studio."

With Devonshire the great artist was particularly pleased, and declared that he had never seen so many natural beauties in so limited an extent of country as

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he saw in the vicinity of Plymouth. He was specially delighted with Mount Edgcumbe, a fact that no one will express surprise at who has ever visited that delightful spot.

With the utmost zest he seems to have given himself up to the enjoyment of this tour, the enjoyment in part consisting of an occasional "roughing it." Let the following, also from Mr. Cyrus Redding, be taken to wit:

"We had only reached the Wear Head of the Tamar, no great way below the Duke of Bedford's cottage at Endsleigh, when night came on. Turner was struck with admiration at the bridge above the Wear, which he declared altogether Italian. Our party consisted of four. To go down the river in the night was impracticable, on account of the chance of getting on shore upon the mud-banks. There was an inn hard by, at which beds could not be obtained; and some course must be resolved upon. We might walk to Tavistock, three or four miles off; but a vehicle which had come from Plymouth that day with two of our party could do no more than carry two to the town. Turner said that he would rather stay until the morning, on the spot where we were debating the subject. He did not mind sitting up. Would any one volunteer with him? The horse would come over fresh in the morning with those who might then leave. I volunteered. Our friends drove off, and the painter and myself soon adjourned to the miserable little inn. I proposed to 'plank it,' in the sailor's

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phrase—that is, to go to sleep on the floor—but some part of it was damp, and the whole well sanded, so that it was not a practicable couch, however hard. Turner said before he considered any other matter, he must have some bread, cheese, and porter. Very good bread and cheese were produced, and the home-brewed suited Turner, who expatiated upon his success with a degree of excitement which, with his usual, dry, short, mode of expressing his feelings, could hardly be supposed. I pleased him further by inquiring whether bacon and eggs could be obtained; and, getting an affirmative reply, we supped in clover, and sat up until midnight in conversation. I found the artist could, when he pleased, make sound, pithy, though somewhat caustic remarks upon men and things, with a fluency rarely heard from him. We talked much of the Academy, and he admitted that it was not all which it might be made in regard to art. The 'clock that ticked against the wall' sounded twelve; I proposed to go to sleep. Turner leaned his elbow upon the table, and putting his feet upon a second chair, took a position sufficiently easy, and fell asleep. I laid myself at full length across three or four chairs, and soon followed his example.

"Before six in the morning he rose, and went down towards the bridge. The air was balmy; the strong light between the hills, the dark umbrage, and the flashing water presented a beautiful early scene. Turner sketched the bridge, but appeared, from

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changing his position several times, as if he had tried more than one sketch, or could not please himself as to the best point. I saw that bridge and part of the scene afterwards in a painting in his gallery. He had made several additions to the scenery near the bridge from his own imagination. The picture was poetical, and, if I remember, he had introduced into it some of the fictitious characters of the heathen mythology; he had bathed it in the gorgeous glories of the southern sun, clothed it in barbaric pearl and gold—in fact, enriched it with that indefinable attraction which true genius confers on all its works." Touches like these, so graphic and strong, enable us to see the artist, and the better to understand the man.

He was an acute observer, and did not often commit himself to a statement unless he was sure. An example has already been given in the case of the carrots. Another example may fittingly be introduced here. "I remember one evening on the Tamar," says Mr. Redding, "the sun had set and the shadows become very deep. Demaria (an officer in the army, who was one of the party) looking at a seventy-four-gun man-of-war lying under Saltash, said,

"'You were right, Mr. Turner; the ports cannot be seen. The ship is one dark mass.'

"'I told you so,' said Turner; 'now you see it is all one mass of shade.'

"'Yes, I see that is the truth, and yet the ports are there.'

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"'We can take only what we see, no matter what is there. There are people in the ship: we don't see them through the planks.'

"'True,' replied Demaria.

"There had been a discussion between the two professional men, in which Turner had rightly observed that after sunset, under the hills, the port-holes were undiscernible. We now had ocular proof of it."

Several pictures were the result of this tour in Devonshire, two or three of which were exhibited, the most famous being "Crossing the Brook." This is a composition into which the artist incorporated several distinct sketches of scenery on the river Tamar, especially a spot near Newbridge. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1815, and is now in the National Gallery. It is regarded as one of the most important of Turner's pictures, as it marks the transition from his earlier style to that of his maturity. It may be well on this account to remember the date, and for the sake of assisting the memory let us state that the year of its exhibition was the year in which the battle of Waterloo was fought. It can scarcely be said to be a work in full colour, but such colour as there is in it pervades the entire work. The light, too, is all-pervading, the canvas being lighted from side to side, and from top to bottom. One very essential thing in the picture is, that it gave proof that the hand that produced it could paint a distance better than that of any master who had preceded

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this one in his special department of landscape painting.

The year 1815 was a great year for Turner, for now was also exhibited his "Dido Building Carthage." This is one of Turner's best known and most magnificent works. It hangs in the National Gallery beside Claude's "Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba." On the other side of the doorway, in the same room, and on the same wall, hang Claude's "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," and Turner's "Sun Rising in a Mist." There these pictures hang side by side respectively, according to the direction of Turner's will, inviting comparison. We speak with diffidence on the subject, but our own feeling is, that while Claude's "Queen of Sheba" eclipses Turner's "Dido," Claude's "Marriage" is eclipsed by Turner's "Sun Rising."

It is said that the "Dido Building Carthage" was originally painted for £100 for a gentleman, who declined to take it when the critics began to attack it. Probably, however, this gentleman lived to repent having attached too much importance to the verdict of the critics. The artist himself persistently thought well of this picture, notwithstanding adverse criticism, and secretly determined to keep it, and leave it to the nation as one of the pictures upon which he would appeal for the verdict of posterity. This determination he held to, although he had more than one strong temptation to depart from it. It is related for example, that a merchant who had one day spent £10,000 in

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the purchase of pictures from Turner, suddenly, as he was on the point of leaving, made this proposal—

"Now, Mr. Turner, there are three more pictures in your gallery; I'll give you £5,000 for the three, if you will allow me to pick."

"Well," said Turner, "tell me which they are."

The merchant began with "Dido Building Carthage," but was stopped at once with the answer—

"No, it's a noble offer; but I have willed it."

The would-be buyer of this noble picture then pressed him to take £5,000 for two, but he merely replied "I have willed it."

Again, at a great meeting at Somerset House, at which Sir Robert Peel, Lord Hardinge, and others were present, it was unanimously agreed to buy two pictures of Turner for presentation to the National Gallery, as monuments of art for the incitement and instruction of artists and lovers of art among the generations to come; and a memorial to the artist was drawn up, and presented by Mr. Griffiths, one of his friends, to whom the task was highly pleasing. The offer was £5,000 for the "Building of Carthage" and another picture, "The Decline of Carthage," which was painted a year or two after the painting of the former one.

Turner was deeply moved on reading the memorial, and the tears gathered in his eyes. While, however, expressing the pride and delight which an offer from such men gave him, he declined to sell the pictures.

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At the same time he bade Mr. Griffiths "Make my compliments to the memorialists, and tell them 'Carthage' may some day become the property of the nation."

We cannot be surprised that such incidents as these gave the greatest satisfaction to the artist, or that he should have spoken of them as "a great triumph."

CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT TWICKENHAM.

ABOUT this time, namely in 1813, or 1814, Turner went still further up the Thames to live, and either built or bought a house at Twickenham. At first he called this house Solus Lodge; but, perhaps, thinking that this was too suggestive of his own habits, he changed it to Sandycombe. It is on the road from Twickenham to Isleworth, and is built on somewhat low-lying ground, suggestive of damp. The original structure has been added to, but it is not difficult to see how it looked in Turner's time, as the additions are easily distinguished from the rest of the building. It was a small semi-Italian villa covered with plaster and decorated with iron balustrades and steps.

Turner had now had his father living with him some years, and it appears to have been largely for his father's sake that he went to Twickenham to

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live. He probably felt that country air and country scenes would be both a pleasant and a beneficial change for the old gentleman, after having been cooped up the greater part of his life in London. Turner, senior, is described as having been a little thin common-looking old man, very short, and endowed with all the loquacity usual with professors of the block. He had a nervous habit of raising himself up on his toes every two or three minutes, which, of course, added to the impression of oddity which his appearance made upon strangers.

Some amusing stories are told of the old man's carefulness, and of his little expedients to save a shilling here and there. For instance, he had constituted himself the curator of his son's gallery in Queen Anne Street, and found the distance between it and Twickenham rather greater than he liked. It was, however, not the toil so much as the expense of going to and fro that troubled him. One day a friend found him in a most disconsolate mood. The cost of coming up daily to town to open the gallery was lying heavily upon his heart, and the thought of it was taking all sweetness from his life. A short time after this the same friend met him again, when manifestly the load was gone, as he was gay and happy, and betrayed a greater tendency than usual to raise himself on his old toes. When asked the reason for his jubilation, he replied, "Why, lookee here, I have found a way at last of coming up

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cheap from Twickenham to open my son's gallery. I found out the inn where the market gardeners baited their horses; I made friends with one on 'em; and now for a glass o' gin a day he brings me up in his cart on the top of the vegetables."

Another story recounts how the artist, having received many civilities from a brother artist, who was also a clergyman, when in Scotland, invited him to partake of his hospitality if ever he visited London. The clerical artist, whose name was Thomson, being subsequently in London, called upon Turner, and was invited to dinner on a certain day. In the course of that day he had occasion to call on a certain nobleman, who also asked him to dine. Mr. Thomson pleaded the excuse of a previous engagement, but when the nobleman learned that it was Turner who proposed to entertain him, he desired him to bring the artist with him. Then thinking it would be better to call and make the invitation in person, especially as it would give him the opportunity of viewing the artist's pictures, he did so.

"Well," said Turner after a little demur; "if I must, I suppose I must; but——"

Before he had time to complete the sentence, the parental Turner, who had been listening while preparing a canvas for his son, dreading, perhaps, lest any further hesitation should necessitate the dinner at home, thrust open the door, and without any attempt at disguising his own feelings, said—

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"Go, Billy, go; the mutton needn't be cooked, Billy."

Concerning Sandycombe Lodge, the son of Turner's friend, Mr. Trimmer, clergyman of Heston, and an amateur artist, says, "It was an unpretending little place, and the rooms were small. There were several models of ships in glass cases, to which Turner had painted a sea and background. They much resembled the large vessels in his sea pieces. Richmond scenery greatly influenced his style. The Scotch firs (or stone pine) around are in most of his large classical subjects, and Richmond landscape is decidedly the basis of 'The Rise of Carthage.'

"Here he had a long strip of land planted by him so thickly with willows, that his father, who delighted in the garden, complained that it was a mere osier-bed. Turner used to refresh his eye with the run of the boughs from his sitting-room window.

"At the end of his garden was a square pond—I rather think he dug it himself—into which he put the fish he caught. The surface was covered with water-lilies. I have been out fishing with him on the Old Brent, with a can to catch trout for his preserve; but the fish always disappeared. At last he discovered that a jack was in the pond; and Turner would have it that it had been put in to annoy him.

"I have dined with him at Sandycombe Lodge, when my father happened to drop in, too, in the middle of the day. Everything was of the most

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modest pretensions; two-pronged forks, and knives, with large round ends for taking up the food; not that I ever saw him so use them, though it is said to have been Dean Swift's mode of feeding himself. The table-cloth barely covered the table, and the earthenware was in strict keeping. I remember his saying one day 'Old Dad,' as he called his father, 'have you not any wine?' Whereupon Turner, senior, produced a bottle of currant, which Turner smelling said, 'Why, what have you been about?' The senior, it seemed, had rather overdone it with hollands, and it was set aside. At this time Turner was a very abstemious person.

* * * * * *

"When, as a child, I have been out fly-fishing with him on the Thames, he insisted on my having the fish, which he strung on some grass through the gills. He seemed to take more pleasure in giving me the fish than in taking them himself. These little incidents mark character. He threw a fly in first-rate style, and it bespeaks the sportsman wherever the rod is introduced into his pictures.

"He had a boat at Richmond, but we never went farther than the water's edge, as my father had insured his life (!) . . . . Besides his boat, he had a gig and an old horse; an old crop-eared bay horse, or rather, a cross between a horse and a pony. In the gig he used to drive out sketching, and take my father and myself with him. His sketching apparatus

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was under the seat. I remember once going on an expedition of this kind to Staines, and thence to Runnymede, where he made some sketches. From these he painted a picture, which strongly resembles the place to this day. We went I remember, at a very steady pace, for Turner painted much faster than he drove. He said, if when out sketching you felt at a loss, you had only to turn round, or walk a few paces farther, and you had what you wanted before you.

"He has immortalised his old 'crop-ear' in his 'Frosty Morning,' which is now exhibited. There are two horses, but they are both taken from crop-ear. Turner could not paint a horse; still he has been very happy in catching the stiffness of old crop-ear's fore legs. And, on the subject of horses, I once asked him long afterwards, if Gilpin had not painted the horse in 'Hannibal Crossing the Alps.' It was his own design, he said; no painter had ever touched any picture of his.

"The 'Frost Piece' was one of his favourites. Once he talked of giving it to my father, who highly prized it. He said he was travelling by coach in Yorkshire, and sketched it *en route;* and the coach is introduced in the distance in the picture. My father told me that when at Somerset House it was much brighter, and made a great sensation. It was over the fireplace in his gallery. The girl with the hoe over her shoulders, I have heard my father say, reminded him of a young girl whom he occasionally

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saw at Queen Anne Street, and whom, from her resemblance to Turner, he took to be a relation. The same female figure appears in his 'Crossing the Brook.' This picture I consider one of Turner's happiest productions, and totally distinct from Cuyp, with whom it is injudiciously confounded."

Such gossipy talk as this is both extremely interesting and very valuable. The views it gives us of Turner and his surroundings at Twickenham, and elsewhere, are quite photographic in their distinctness, and, we feel also, their fidelity.

Mr. Trimmer has also something to say about the colours Turner used, and as his testimony on this point may have both interest and value to such budding or amateur artists as may be among our readers, we insert it here :—

"At this early time my father has seen his pictures in progress, and considered that he availed himself largely of body colours. A picture dealer who repaired one of his large pictures, and whose name I forget, told me that Turner came and worked over it with body colours, and then varnished them. At Somerset House I have been told by Howard, that he worked over his pictures with body colours, using brushes with very small handles, and painting from little jars.

"From the examination I made of his half-finished pictures after his death, I could find no traces of body colour; everything was firmly put in in oil; and I

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extend this remark to an unfinished picture of Titian's I once examined. In my opinion, Turner painted all his early pictures in oil, and used body colours very sparingly in his later ones. In fact, I never detected any traces of body colour in any picture of his, nor did I see any body colours in his studio, although he might have employed dry colour. I believe (like Reynolds) he never kept to one plan for any length of time; I mean, latterly, when he began to paint Italian subjects, and was striving to get more vivid effects. He was ignorant of chemistry and the affinities of colour; and I have heard him say that no one could tell if a method would answer, as he would be dead before it could be proved. He was far from satisfied with his own method, and would gladly have changed it for a better. My father, who was fond of experiments in colours, often talked the subject over with him. Turner was always impressed with the idea that the old masters had a much better method than the moderns. . . .

"He once told my father that he had gone nine times over one of his large skies. My father one day said to him, 'Nothing is to be done without ultramarine.' 'Cobalt is good enough for me,' was Turner's reply. Mr. Jones, his executor, told me that at his suggestion Turner introduced Prussian blue into his skies, as nearer Nature; and Mr. Danby, who prepared his palette, informed me that he also used smalt largely. On the subject of skies, the

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'Carthage' in the National Gallery, had an entirely new sky painted at the desire of Lawrence and other brother artists, who, when he had altered it, said the picture was ruined. The sun was yellow in Turner's gallery; it is now white.

"Looking at a black cow against the sun, in the course of a walk out with me, he observed, "It is purple, not black, as it is painted.' In his later pictures he used blue-black freely, and had no fear of the canon 'Don't use black when painting a blackamoor.' 'Yellow,' he said, was his favourite colour, 'for pictures wanted colour.'"

While living at Twickenham, Turner was a comparatively frequent visitor at the vicarage at Heston, about four miles away. His brother artist Howard, a Royal Academician, was also frequently at the art-loving vicar's. It is said that on one occasion Howard was painting a portrait of Mr. Trimmer's second son, and Turner was constantly criticising the work while it was in progress. The portrait was full-size and full-length of a boy of three years old, dressed in a white frock and red morocco shoes. Annoyed at Turner's frequent fault-finding, Howard one day told him he had better do it himself. Hereupon, Turner taking up the cat, said, "This is what I should do," and wrapping the cat up in his red pocket handkerchief he placed it under one of the little fellow's arms. The effect was excellent, and was transferred to the canvas, Turner himself putting in parts of the

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cat, handkerchief, and landscape. The figure received an interest from the cat which it wanted, and the red morocco shoes were no longer isolated patches of bright colour at the bottom of the picture. The blank expanse of the white frock, too, was relieved, varied, and lightened, by the tabby face of pussy and the encircling red handkerchief. Thus, a picture which was on the verge of failure, became a decided success.

The thrifty and acquisitive Turner, senior, made great exertions to add to his son's estate at Twickenham, by running out little earthworks towards the road and then fencing them round. A regular row of these—as if miniature fortifications—adorned Sandycombe at one time, and were locally designated "Turner's Cribs." Alas! for the old man's "cribbing" labours, the minions of some "Local Board" or other came one day, and ruthlessly swept them all away.

Turner kept on his house at Twickenham till the year 1826, when, for his father's sake, he gave it up. "Dad," he said, "was always working in the garden and catching cold, and required looking after." So, that he might be "looked after," he had him at his London house. In 1830 the old gentleman died; the son was much afflicted by his bereavement, and assured a friend that he felt the loss like that of an only child.

It is not surprising that Turner should have felt the loss of his father so much. He was now alone in the world, with no relatives for whom he cared much, or

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who cared much for him. No doubt for his loneliness none was to blame but himself. He repulsed his relations under the impression, apparently, that if they made friendly overtures to him they did so with an eye to his money. Dr. Shaw, one of his relations, has described a visit which he once paid to the recluse, and we insert his description here because of the view which it gives both of Turner and of the house he for the most part occupied :—

"I once had an interview with the great artist," says the doctor, "and once only, with a view to claim the relationship. A time was duly appointed for an interview. Accordingly I went to his residence in Queen Anne Street, when I was ushered into a dark room, where the mantel-piece was so covered with dust that I had a great difficulty in ascertaining whether it was wood or marble, in the testing of which a large finger-mark remained as evidence of careless and bad management in house-keeping. The door outside was as shabby as if it had formed part of a ruin. A circular space surrounding the knocker showed the original grain of the wood: all the paint having disappeared for many years past. This circular space was a remarkable feature of the door, being nearly white, and this vividly contrasted with the dingy accumulated paint and dirt which was visible on every other part of the door. The iron chain communicating with the kitchen bell outside was as thoroughly rusted as if it had lain twenty years

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in a desert, without shelter from the oxidising influences of rain and dew. It could not have been painted for twenty years at least, perhaps not for forty. As I had to wait some ten minutes at least before Mr. Turner made his appearance, I had leisure to examine the room and its contents. I have now forgotten the kind of furniture, but I well remember the dark, murky-looking windows. They appeared to me as though they had been cleaned but once, and that must have been when they first came from the hands of the glazier. The room appeared to be less under the influence of the beautiful light of heaven than any other apartment I ever remember to have seen. It was a comparative dungeon, with two dark lanterns for windows. In the midst of various cogitations, which necessarily occupied my mind while alone in this dirty dungeon, on a sudden the great artist made his appearance. I bowed, not too obsequiously nor too low, putting a question to him immediately after the salutation as follows :—'May I ask you if you are the Mr. Turner who visited Shelford Manor in the county of Nottingham, in your youth?' 'I am,' he answered in a tone and manner full of dignity, evidently evincing feelings of an untoward nature. He was clearly paving the way for a magnificent outburst of passion; the thunderstorm was gathering. To appease him I became somewhat bland in manner; I tried to throw oil upon the troubled waters. Assuming a manner which perhaps

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might be denominated one of a more winning kind, I said, "May I take the liberty of asking you whether your mother's name was Marshall?' He replied in a tone of voice, accompanied with the look of a fury, clearly showing that the flash of lightning had appeared to warn me that the storm was about to break. After this I began to feel uneasy. I felt half inclined to say something monstrously uncivil to him for his bearish manners. I wanted, however, for him to begin the attack, which soon followed. He drew himself suddenly into the most dignified attitude I ever beheld even from a clever actor or an infuriated duke. His manner was full of majesty, accompanied with a diabolical look. He said, 'I consider, sir, that you have taken a most unwarrantable liberty with me by the manner in which you have obtruded yourself upon me.' I immediately apologised; to which he replied (by one of the most dignified bows I ever remember to have seen from duke, lord, dancing-master, or actor), 'I accept the apology. After humbling myself, I then felt that it was my turn, in justice to myself, to confront the great artist in a very bold and independent manner, accompanied with resentment. 'I beg leave, sir, to state to you,' (at the same time assuming all the dignity of manner at my command), then marching to within a yard of him, and eyeing him as the warrior would look at the man he was about to bayonet, I addressed him as follows: 'I am independent, sir, both in spirit

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and in pocket, and be assured that my whole and sole object in calling upon you was to connect myself with the distinguished name of Turner.' The smile that he gave me at this moment I can only compare to the rays of the sun suddenly breaking through dark and stormy clouds. 'I hope, sir,' he replied, 'whenever you come to town you will give me the favour of a visit; I shall always be glad to see you.' He then preceded me to the door, which he opened, politely bowing. I frequently went to lounge away half an hour in his gallery, without ever obtruding myself upon him; I had also the privilege of taking any other person. This was our first and last interview."

The gallery, to which allusion has more than once been made, was quite in keeping with the rest of the dingy house in Queen Anne Street. The drugget, once red, was threadbare and grey. The red cloth which covered the walls had done duty at the Queen's coronation, and afterwards was bought by Turner as a bargain. It was marked all over with tack-holes and rents. The screen was made of the black strips of some refuse and "remainder." Against the wall there were heaps of dirty frames, and stacks of dusty pictures, with their faces turned inward. The sofa did not seem by its appearance to promise unfailing support to such as ventured to sit upon it. Latterly the place got most dilapidated. The oiled paper of the skylights hung down in black, sooty, furred

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slips. The damp here and there had free access, and wrought considerable damage. In this sordid den were thirty thousand proofs rotting and moulding, and oil paintings which are now numbered among the masterpieces of art. For the contents of this neglected place he had been offered, and had refused, a hundred thousand pounds.

CHAPTER VII.

WORK OF THE ARTIST'S PRIME.

THE history of Turner, as a man, for the rest of his life could easily be comprised within the space of half a dozen pages. The complete history of his art would fill many volumes. From this time till the year 1846 the pictures he exhibited in the Royal Academy and British Institution reached the large number of nearly a hundred and fifty, and the engravings published from his drawings are to be numbered by hundreds.

In 1816 he exhibited only two pictures, both having classical subjects. One was entitled "The Temple of Jupiter Restored." The other was a "View of the Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius, in the Island of Aegina, with the Greek National Dance of the Romaika; the Acropolis of Athens in the Distance." It was in the year following that the

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"Decline of the Carthaginian Empire" was exhibited. The following prose and verse referred to it in the Academy catalogue—

"Rome, being determined on the overthrow of her hated rival, demanded from her such terms as might either force her into war, or ruin her by compliance. The enervated Carthaginians, in their anxiety for peace, consented to give up even their arms and their children.

> 'At hope's delusive smile,
> The chieftain's safety and the mother's pride,
> Were to the insidious conqueror's grasp resigned;
> While o'er the western wave th' ensanguined sun,
> In gathering haze, a stormy signal spread,
> And sat portentous.'"

This picture was dealt with very severely by the critics, and is so still. One of these not long since wrote, "The perspective is bad; the sky, once fine, is now foxy; and the temples are somewhat leathery." Even Mr. Ruskin condemns it, and declares that it was painted while the "brown demon"—referring to the artist's fondness for brown just at this period—was in full force. Yet, singular to relate, Turner thought well of this picture, and persisted in thinking well of it, notwithstanding unfavourable criticism. He declared that it was a better picture than its predecessor and companion; "but," said he, "they don't understand it." How often it is that a great author or artist differs from the general judgment as to his

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work, and persists in pronouncing that one of his best works which the critics declare to be one of his worst. The frequency of this is remarkable, and suggests very interesting inquiries.

In 1818, Turner made a tour in Scotland in company with Sir Walter Scott. The two were associated in the production of "Provincial Antiquities," and visited the places to be described and delineated together. Scott was at this time in his prime, the wonderful novels bringing him in an income of £10,000 a-year. The year 1818 was that in which the "Heart of Midlothian" appeared, and in which he began the "Bride of Lammermoor," two of his tenderest and most artistic stories.

Both Turner and Scott were men of sublime imagination, and each, in his particular line of art, a king; but Scott did not realise the greatness of Turner, and Turner did not realise the greatness of Scott. The latter would have preferred, as an artist, Mr. Thomson, of Duddingstone, the clergyman and landscape painter, but "supposed he must acquiesce" in the selection of Turner, as "he was all the fashion."

The pictures which Turner exhibited in this year were "Raby Castle, the Seat of the Earl of Darlington," "Dord or Dordrecht—the Dort Packet Boat, from Rotterdam, Becalmed;" a "Landscape—Composition of Tivoli;" and "The Field of Waterloo." The Academy catalogue contained the following lines in connection with the last-named—

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"Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle, proudly gay;
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms—the day,
Battles magnificently stern array!
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse, friend, foe, in one red burial blent."

This picture must be looked upon as one of the artist's failures. It was scarcely the kind of subject to suit his peculiar genius, which did not lie in the direction of figure-painting, but of landscape. Mr. Hamerton speaks of the "faulty drawing" in this picture as "insupportable," and declares "it is a subject for Detaille, or De Neuville, not for him who, after wandering in the tranquil paradise of Claude, was destined to open for us a fairer Eden of his own."

In the following year, 1819, Turner visited Italy, and the result soon became manifest. "From this time forward his works became remarkable for their colour. Down to this time he had painted principally in browns, blues, and greys, employing red and yellow very sparingly, but he had been gradually warming his scale almost from the beginning. From the wash of sepia and Prussian blue, he had slowly proceeded in the direction of golden and reddish-brown, and had produced both drawings and pictures with wonderful effects of mist and sunlight, but he had scarcely gone

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beyond the sober colouring of Vandevelde and Ruysdael till he began his great pictures in rivalry with Claude."

Turner was a poor correspondent, and as he appears to have left nothing in the shape of diaries, or written memoranda, or but very little, we know scarcely anything about his movements on the occasion of this continental visit. We are indebted to this visit, however, for the "Bay of Baiae, with Apollo and the Sybil," one of the most magnificent of his productions. Mr. Hamerton thus speaks of it:— "Although connected with the name of a locality, this picture really belongs almost as completely to the realms of imagination as those pure inventions with fanciful titles which amused or perplexed the critics. It is a poetical scene, with a fine expanse of land and water, the land scenery being more than usually elaborate and full of rich invention. The gay delight in the beauty of 'Sunny Baiae,' which is expressed in the motto, is visible also in the painting, which has been executed with evident enjoyment. This is really a picture after Turner's own heart, with plenty of light, plenty of space for the eye to wander over, endless detail to amuse and occupy his inventive faculty, and just a bit of mythology to take the subject out of the common world. Besides, although the Bay of Baiae is a real locality, it has been celebrated long ago in the Horatian verse, and is, therefore, sacred to the classic muse. The Cumæan Sibyl, who is seated

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with Apollo under the shade of the tall pine-trees, is famous in old poetry and in the art of the Italian Renaissance. Notwithstanding his lack of scholarship, one of Turner's strongest characteristics was a taste for associating his work with places and personages of historical or legendary interest, and there were certain stories of antiquity which took root in his mind very strongly. That about the Cumæan Sibyl, beloved by Apollo, was one of them. . . . There is no telling what analogies may have been suggested to Turner's mind by the story of the Sibyl, but it is quite possible that he may have followed out some analogies for himself, in his own obscure way. The picture was painted lightly and easily, with a degree of refinement far surpassing the early work of the master; but it was not soundly painted as to the materials, for the delicate colouring has not stood well everywhere. In some parts it is cracked, in others the relations of the most aërial tints have evidently somehow gone wrong; though what they were, as the painter laid them, it is not now possible to determine."

Just at this period of his history, perhaps, the most worthy work of the artist is to be found not in his oil paintings, but in his drawings for the engravers. Dr. Whitaker's "History of Richmondshire," which he illustrated, was published in 1823, and the "Rivers of England," a series of sixteen subjects dealing with some of the smaller and less known rivers of England,

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appeared in the following year. The original of "Totnes on the Dart," perhaps, the most exquisite of the latter series, is in the National Gallery, and is remarkable for the minuteness of its finish, and the breadth and truth of its effect. Says a critic, "The tiny group of poplars in the middle distance are painted with such dexterity that the impression of multitudinous leafage is perfectly conveyed, and the stillness of clear smooth water filled with innumerable variegated reflections, the beautiful distance with castle, church, and town, and the group of gulls in the foreground, make a picture of placid beauty, in which there is no straining for effect, no mannerism, nothing to remind you of the artist. It is only in the touches of red in the fore of the river (touches unaccounted for by anything in the drawing) that you discern him at last, and find that you are looking not at Nature but 'a Turner.' If you are inclined to be angry with these touches, cover them with the hand and find out how much of the charm is lost."

Speaking of the entire series of the "Rivers of England," the writer just quoted, Mr. W. Cosmo Monkhouse, the author of "Studies of Sir E. Landseer," and a useful critical work on Turner, says that after this series the master produced work more magnificent in colour, more transcendent in imagination, indeed *the* work which singles him out individually from all landscape artists, in which the essences of the material world were revealed in a

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manner which was not only unrealised but unconceived before; but for perfect balance of power for the mirroring of Nature as it appears to ninety-nine out of every hundred, for fidelity of colour of both sky and earth, and form (especially of trees), for carefulness and accuracy of drawing, for work that neither startles you by its eccentricity nor puzzles you as to its meaning, which satisfies without cloying, and leaves no doubt as to the truth of its allusion, there is none to compare with these drawings of his of England after his first visit to Italy—and especially (though perhaps it is because we know them best that we say so) the drawings for the 'Rivers of England.' We are certain, at least of this, that no one has a right to form an opinion about Turner's power generally, either to go into ecstasies over, or to deride, his later work, till he has seen some of these matchless drawings. They form the true centre of his artistic life, the point at which his desire for the simple truth, and the imperious demands of his imagination were most nearly balanced."

Turner's first illustrations of the works of a modern poet were published in 1825; these were of Byron. In this year he exhibited one picture, the "Harbour of Dieppe," and in the year following—that in which the publication of the "Southern Coast," another work on which he had been engaged, terminated, he exhibited three, one of which was "Cologne—The Arrival of a Packet Boat—Evening."

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It should be stated that in visiting Italy the artist made a detour, and visited also the Rhine.

The following newspaper description of this picture, is appreciative and accurate—

"It represents the Rhine under the walls of Cologne, with the *Treckshuyt* arriving, and taking up its berth for landing the passengers. The river is placid, and scarce rippled by the slowly-moving *Treckshuyt*, as she makes her way past the picturesque craft beside her. On the right are the walls, with a tower and spire breaking their line, and running up to a postern backed by a taller tower. In the foreground some balks of timber, and the spider-like arms of a couple of those fishing-nets, which tourists by the Rhine and Moselle know so well, reflected in the wet sand, and casting their evening shadows as well as their reflections. In the distance you catch a glimpse of the distant bridge of boats. The sky is being rapt through that rosy change, which precedes the dying of twilight into dark. The sun is not seen in the picture, but a cloud lies between it and the spectator; and from behind this the broad slanting rays strike on town and tower, and shoot down to the stream, flinging on its unruffled face, and on the rounded sides of the *Treckshuyt* the shadows of intercepting edifices; while from the lighted water a glow strikes back into the cool violet shadows cast by wall and steeple, and fills them with reflected light."

At this time, too, and at intervals for twelve years

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afterwards, the important work "England and Wales," including towns, remarkable buildings, and beautiful scenery, occupied the attention and engaged the skill of the artist. He also, in 1826, issued the prospectus of his series, "The Ports of England," which was "dedicated, with permission, to His Most Gracious Majesty George the Fourth." This series seems to have been broken off before it was completed, some of the most important of English ports, such as Liverpool and Bristol, being omitted. The plates were republished in 1856, with letterpress by Mr. Ruskin.

To notice all, or a tithe, of Turner's pictures in a work like this, would be most tedious; and, therefore, simply mentioning that another of the artist's Carthage pictures now in the National Gallery, "Dido directing the Equipment of the Fleet," was exhibited in 1828, we pass on to his second visit to Italy, which he made in the last-named year.

It is not often, indeed it is most seldom, that we get a glimpse of Turner as revealed by himself, except through his pictures; so that our young readers will, doubtless, thank us for inserting the following letters to two of his friends while on this tour, and fortunately available for such a purpose. The first is to the painter George Jones, R.A., and is as follows:—

"ROME, Oct. 13, 1828.

"DEAR JONES,—Two months nearly in getting to this Terra Pictura, *and at work;* but the length

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of time is my own fault. I must see the South of France, which almost knocked me up, the heat was so intense, particularly at Nismes and Avignon; and until I got a plunge into the sea at Marseilles, I felt so weak that nothing but the change of scene kept me onwards to my distant point.

"Genoa and all the sea-coast from Nice to Spezzia is remarkably rugged and fine; so is Massa. Tell that fat fellow Chantrey, that I did think of him, *then* (but not the first or the last time), of the thousands he had made out of those marble craigs which only afforded me a sour bottle of wine and a sketch; but he deserves everything which is good, though he did give me a fit of the spleen at Carrara.

"Sorry to hear your friend Sir Henry Bunbury has lost his lady. How did you know this? You will answer, of Captain Napier, at *Siena.* The letter announcing the sad event arrived the next day after I got there. They were on the wing—Mrs. W. Light to Leghorn, to meet Colonel Light, and Captain and Mrs. Napier for Naples; so all things considered, I determined to quit instanter, instead of adding to the trouble.

"Hope that you have been better than usual, and that the pictures go on well. If you should be passing Queen Anne Street, just say that I am well and in Rome, for I fear that young Hakewell has written to his father of my being unwell; and may I trouble you to drop a line into the twopenny post to Mr. C. Heath, 6, Seymour Place, New Pancras Church; or

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send my people to tell him that if he has anything to send me to put it in a letter (it is the most sure way of reaching me) directed for me No. 12, Piazza Mignanelli, Rome, and to which place I hope you will send me a line. Excuse my troubling you with my requests of business. Remember me to all friends. So God bless you. Adieu.

"J. M. W. TURNER."

The second letter was to "that fat fellow Chantrey," the sculptor, another of Turner's personal friends, and was as follows :—

"NO. 12, PIAZZA MIGNANELLI, ROME,
"Nov. 6, 1828.

"MY DEAR CHANTREY,—I intended long before this (but you will say, fudge) to have written; but even now very little information have I to give you in matters of art, for I have confined myself to the painting department at Corso; and having finished *one*, am about the second, and getting on with Lord E's., which I began the very first touch at Rome; but as the folk here talked that I would show them *not*, I finished a small three feet four to stop their gabbling; so now to business.

"Sculpture, of course, first, for it carries away all the patronage, so it is said in Rome; but all seem to share in the goodwill of the patrons of the day. Gott's studio is full. Wyatt, and Rennie, Ewing, Buxton, all employed. Gibson has two groups in

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hand, 'Venus and Cupid;' and 'the Rape of Hylas,' three figures, very forward, though I doubt much if it will be in time (taking the long voyage into the scale), for the exhibition, though it is for England. Its style is something like 'The Psyche,' being two standing figures of nymphs leaning, enamoured, over the youthful Hylas, with his pitcher. The Venus is a sitting figure, with the Cupid in attendance; and if it had wings like a dove to flee away and be at rest, the rest would not be the worse for the change. Thorwaldsen is closely engaged on the late Pope's (Pius VII.) monument. Portraits of the superior animal, man, is to be found in all. In some the inferior—viz., greyhounds and poodles, cats and monkeys, etc., etc.

"Pray give my remembrances to Jones and Stokes, and tell *him* that I have not seen a bit of coal stratum for months. My love to Mrs. Chantrey, and take the same and good wishes of yours most truly,

"J. M. W. TURNER."

The bad English of these letters, has, doubtless, been observed; but on this point something will be said in a later chapter.

The date of Turner's return to England was probably the beginning of 1829, for in the Academy exhibition that year there was a picture entitled "Messieurs les Voyageurs on their Return from Italy (par la diligence) in a Snowdrift upon Mount Tarra, 22nd

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of January, 1829." It is probable that Turner himself was one of the *voyageurs*, and that in the picture he has depicted an incident of his homeward journey. This picture, and the "View of Orvieto," as well as a composition entitled "Palestrina," were the more immediate results of this tour. In this year 1829 it must be mentioned that the master exhibited his great picture "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TURNERIAN STYLE.

It has already been stated that in 1830 Turner lost his father. In this year, too, died an artist friend, Sir Thomas Lawrence, of whose funeral he painted a picture from memory. Writing to his friend Jones in February of that year, he says—

"Dear Jones,—I delayed answering yours until the chance of this finding you in Rome, to give you some account of the dismal prospect of Academic affairs, and of the last sad ceremonies paid yesterday to departed talent gone to that bourn from whence no traveller returns. Alas! only two short months Sir Thomas followed the coffin of Dawe to the same place. We then were his pall-bearers. Who will do the like for me, or when, God only knows how soon! However, it is something to feel

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that gifted talent can be acknowledged by the many who yesterday waded up to their knees in snow and muck to see the funeral pomp swelled up by carriages of the great, *without the persons themselves*."

In comparatively quick succession after this he lost his closest friends by death; among whom may be mentioned Dr. Munro, his early friend and patron, Lord Egremont, Chantrey, Mr. Fawkes, and Wilkie. The last-named died at sea, and his burial in the great deep is the subject of a well-known picture in the National Gallery. This picture was suggested on this wise: shortly after Wilkie's death a conversation took place between Turner and his friend Jones as follows:—

T. "I suppose nobody will do anything to commemorate Wilkie?"

J. "I shall pay a humble tribute by making a drawing representing his funeral."

T. "How will you do it?"

J. "On the deck of the vessel, as it has been described to me by persons present, and at the time that Wilkie's body was lowered into the sea."

T. "Well, I will do it as it must have appeared off the coast."

The funeral gloom of this picture every visitor to the National Gallery will remember. Turner painted the sails of the vessel as black as he could make them. This drew forth a remonstrance from one who observed that the colour and effect were untrue. "I

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only wish," said he, "I had any colour to make them blacker."

It is quite possible that the death of his father and others set him thinking of his own death; indeed the letter to Mr. Jones, just given, shows that it did. He had now accumulated large wealth, and he had to determine how in the event of his decease it should be disposed of. By the 10th of June, 1831, he had made up his mind, for on that day he signed his will—one of the most remarkable documents ever penned by the hand of man.

The period at which we have now arrived certainly marks an epoch in the history of the great English landscape-painter. A decided change comes over his art, a change that has given rise to not a little criticism and controversy. Mr. Ruskin says—"Howsoever it came to pass, a strange, and in many respects grievous metamorphosis takes place upon him about the year 1825. Thenceforth he shows clearly the sense of a terrific wrongness and sadness, mingled in the beautiful order of the earth; his work becomes partly satirical, partly reckless, partly—and in its greatest and noblest features—tragic." Mr. Ruskin notices this change as early as 1825; to others it is not so noticeable till a few years later.

Mr. Liebriech, a talented surgeon and oculist of St. Thomas's Hospital, who startled the art world by the promulgation of a theory of his as to Turner's sight, mentions 1831 as the year when a decided and

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growing change comes over the manner of Turner's art. According to him all was normal up till 1830, and it is in the following year that the difference is first perceptible. We give his own words, taken from a paper first of all read before a learned society, and afterwards published in a monthly magazine for April, 1872:—

"In 1831 a change in the colouring becomes for the first time perceptible, which gives to the works of Turner a peculiar character not found in any other master. Optically this is caused by an increased intensity of the diffused light proceeding from the most illuminated parts of the landscape. This light forms a haze of a bluish colour, which contrasts too much with the surrounding portion in shadow. From the year 1833 this diffusion of light becomes more and more vertical. It gradually increases during the following years. At first it can only be perceived by a careful examination of the picture, but from the year 1839 the regular vertical streaks become apparent to every one. This increases subsequently to such a degree, that when the pictures are closely examined they appear as if they had been wilfully destroyed by vertical strokes of the brush before they were dry, and it is only from a considerable distance that the object and the meaning of the picture can be comprehended. During the last years of Turner's life this peculiarity became so extreme, that his pictures can hardly be understood at all. . . . .

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"According to my opinion his manner is exclusively the result of a change in his *eyes*, which developed itself during the last twenty years of his life. In consequence of it, the aspect of Nature gradually changed for him, while he continued in an unconscious, I might almost say, in a *naïve*, manner, to reproduce what he saw. And he reproduced it so faithfully and accurately, that he enables us distinctly to recognise the nature of the disease of his eyes, to follow its development step by step, and to prove by an optical contrivance the correctness of our diagnosis."

Again the accomplished writer of the paper says: "After he reached the age of fifty-five the crystalline lenses of Turner's eyes became rather dim, and dispersed the light more strongly, and in consequence threw a bluish mist over illuminated objects. This is a pathological increase of an optical effect, the existence of which, even in normal eyes, can be proved by the following experiment: If you look at a picture which hangs between two windows, you will not be able to see it distinctly, as it will be, so to speak, veiled by a greyish haze. . . . The light of the windows . . . had been diffused by the refracting media of the eye, and had fallen on the same part of the retina on which the picture was formed."

It will readily be believed that such a theory as this did not find much favour with the enthusiastic, thick-and-thin admirers of the artist. After exerting

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their subtlety in endeavouring to perceive the mental process by which their favourite arrived at a certain style of drawing, or colouring, which they had been accustomed to regard as a manifestation of genius, to be told that he never would have adopted it had he been able to see what he was doing, is, to say the least, disappointing. The theory of Mr. Liebriech, however, was not implicitly accepted even by the faculty, and a long article appeared, soon after it was broached, in the *British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review*, in which the writer made merry over it, and also made an attempt, scientifically, to combat it. Referring to this theory he says, "It gradually came to pass that landscapes disfigured by vertical streakiness grew to be as replete with charms for the adoring artist, as such scenes had formerly been ere such streakiness characterised them; that he copied these blemishes believing them to be scenic realities; he, a sane man in the meridian of life, never dreaming under the circumstances that there had grown clouds and cataracts over his eyes. Turner may have become fatuous before his death, but this portion of his life excepted, we regard such a theory as the least admissible of any. Hence these speculations on the association of subjected phenomena with painting; for we hold it to be far more probable that he should venture upon occasional experiments of this sort, than that the theory should hold."

Another theory in reference to the haziness and

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the peculiarity of colouring of Turner's later pictures, was alluded to by the Duke of Westminster, in a speech which he delivered on the occasion of the distribution of prizes to students of Whitelands College, Chelsea, towards the end of the year 1884. He had been speaking of the importance of good cooking, and of its being scientifically studied and taught, and thus went on,—"He was once told a story by Tom Taylor which he thought he might relate them. They were looking one day at one of Turner's pictures, and Mr. Taylor told him that Turner in his later days lost his teeth by degrees, and consequently his digestion became impaired. He then took to drinking sherry, and that improved neither his health nor his art. He went on, and his pictures became worse and worse. He next began drinking brandy, and now, at the present day, you can see some of his pictures at the National Gallery which look more like salads than anything else. Now his Grace believed that if Turner had had a good cook, his works would have been greater than they are, and he would not, at all events, have resorted to sherry and brandy. He hoped the ladies present would not forget the little story, and would keep a watchful eye on their cooks, and not allow them to spoil any future works of art."

Such a story did very well for the occasion to "point a moral," and it is possible that some may believe that in the intemperance of Turner they have the key to the whole mystery; but investigation and

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enquiry into Turner's life and habits will not bear them out. For some few years before his death it is true that he took "more than was good for him." And Mr. Wilkie Collins, in a story supplied to Mr. Thornbury, his earliest biographer, has given to us a comical picture of the great painter as seen by him on varnishing days at the Academy.

"He used to attend his father," he says, "on varnishing days, and remembers seeing Turner, (not the more perfect in his balance for the brown sherry at the Academy lunch), seated on the top of a flight of steps, astride a box. There he sat, a shabby Bacchus, nodding like a Mandarin at his picture, which he, with a pendulum motion, now touched with his brush and now receded from. Yet in spite of sherry, precarious seat, and old age, he went on shaping-in some wonderful dream of colour; every touch meaning something, every pin's head of colour being a note in the chromatic scale." But, though it cannot be denied that towards the last, Turner did become somewhat intemperate, it was only towards the last, and will in no way explain the change which years before came over the manner of his drawing and colouring.

As to this "haziness" and "indefiniteness," it is only fair to remember that the artist himself considered it one of the characteristics of his style, if not, indeed, his strong point. For example, Mr. James Lennox, of New York, was one of the first American

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purchasers of his pictures, and the gentleman who acted as his agent in this country in the business transaction tells the following story:—"Mr. James Lennox, of New York, who knew his pictures only from engravings, wished very much to possess one, and wrote to me to that effect. I replied that his rooms were full of unsold works, and I had no doubt he would part with one. Mr. Lennox expressed his willingness to give £500, and left the choice to me. I called on Turner and asked if he would let a picture go to America. "No; they wont come up to the scratch!" I knew what he meant; for another American had offered him a low price for the 'Téméraire.' I told him a friend of mine would give £500 for anything he would part with. His countenance brightened, and he said at once, 'He may have that, or that, or that,' pointing to three not small pictures. I chose a 'Sunset View of Staffa,' which I had admired more than most of his pictures from the time when it was first exhibited. It was in an old frame, but Turner would have a very handsome new one made for it. When it reached New York, Mr. Lennox was out of town, and we were in suspense some time about its reception."

About a fortnight after its arrival he returned to New York, but only for an hour, and wrote to me, after a hasty first glance, to express his great disappointment. He said he could almost fancy the picture had sustained some damage on the voyage—

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it appeared so indistinct throughout. Still he did not doubt its being very fine, and he hoped to see its merits on further acquaintance; but for the present he could not write to Mr. Turner, as he could only state his present impression.

"Unfortunately, I met Turner at the Academy a night or two after I received this letter, and he asked me if I had heard from Mr. Lennox. I was obliged to say 'Yes.' 'Well, and how does he like the picture?' 'He thinks it indistinct.' 'You should tell him,' he replied, 'that indistinctness is my *forte*.'"

Indistinctness, if not Turner's *forte*, was certainly one of the characteristics of his later style. Mr. Ruskin explains it, in part, by the fact that the artist was accustomed to render his impressions of a landscape from memory, which would not embrace an infinity of details; and, in part, from the difficulty, which inheres in the very nature of things, of uniting definiteness and distinctness with strict accuracy. "Try," says he, "to draw a bank of grass with all its blades, or a bush with all its leaves, and you will soon perceive under what a universal law of obscurity we live, and perceive that all *distinct* drawing must be bad drawing, and that nothing can be right till it is unintelligible."

In the year 1830 Rogers' poem of "Italy" appeared with illustrations by Turner, and in the same year the artist paid another visit to Scotland, commissioned by Mr. Cadell, the publisher, to make

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twenty-four drawings in illustration of Scott's poetical works. After visiting the places immortalised by Scott, he expressed admiration of the poet's description of them. He made an exception, however, in reference to the lines in the "Lord of the Isles," relating to Corriskin in the Isle of Skye :—

> "On high Benmore green mosses grow,
> And heath-bells bud in deep Glencoe,
> And copse on Cruchan-Ben.
> But here above, around, below,
> On mountain or in glen,
> Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
> Nor aught of vegetative power,
> The weary eye may ken."

According to Turner the poet must have availed himself of a poet's licence here, for he declared that *but for one or two* tufts of grass he must have broken his neck, having slipped when trying to attain the best position for making his sketch.

To the years 1833–4–5 belong the beautiful series called the "Rivers of France," published at first under the title of "Turner's Annual Tour." Most of these drawings are arrangements in blue, red, and yellow, but some are of yellow and grey. All of them are exquisitely beautiful in arrangement of line and atmospheric effect. Mr. Ruskin says—

"Of all foreign countries Turner has most entirely entered into the spirit of France ; partly because here he found more fellowship of scene with his own England, partly because an amount of thought which

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will miss of Italy or Switzerland will fathom France, partly because there is in the French foliage and forms of ground much that is especially congenial with his own peculiar choice of form. To what cause it is owing I cannot tell, nor is it generally allowed or felt; but of the fact I am certain, that for grace of stem, and perfection of form in their transparent foliage, the French trees are altogether unmatched; and their modes of grouping and massing are so perfectly and constantly beautiful, that, I think of all countries for educating an artist to the perception of grace, France bears the bell; and that not romantic nor mountainous France, not the Vosges, nor Auvergne, nor Provence; but lowland France, Picardy, and Normandy, the valleys of the Loire, and Seine, and even the district so thoughtlessly and mindlessly abused by English travellers as uninteresting, traversed between Calais and Dijon; of which there is not a single valley but is full of the most lovely pictures, nor a mill from which the artist may not receive instruction; the district immediately above Sens being perhaps the most valuable, from the grandeur of its lines of poplars, and the unimaginable finish and beauty of the tree-forms in the two great avenues without the walls. Of this kind of beauty Turner was the first to take cognisance, and he stills remains the only, but in himself the sufficient, painter of French landscape."

To enter upon any extended remarks concerning

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this series would be beside our purpose, and not probably very interesting to our readers. Suffice it to say, that the drawings comprised in it are not so much matter of fact records of what the artist saw as, to quote another, "poems in colour suggested by pictorial recollections of certain scenes on the rivers of France."

The writer who supplied the letterpress for the "Rivers of France" was Mr. Leitch Ritchie. For the purpose of making their sketches, the one with pen, the other with pencil, they visited the same places, sometimes in company. "I was curious," says Mr. Ritchie, "in observing what he made of the objects he selected for his sketches, and was frequently surprised to find what a forcible idea he conveyed of a place with scarcely a single correct detail. His exaggerations, when it suited his purpose to exaggerate, were wonderful—lifting up, for instance, by two or three stories, the steeple, or rather stunted cone, of a village church—and when I returned to London I never failed to roast him on this habit. He took my remarks in good part, sometimes indeed in great glee, never attempting to defend himself, otherwise than by rolling back the war into the enemy's camp. In my account of the famous Gilles de Retz, I had attempted to identify that prototype of 'Blue Beard' with the hero of the nursery story, by absurdly insisting that his beard was so intensely black that it seemed to have a shade of blue. This tickled the great painter

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hugely; and his only reply to my bantering was, his little sharp eyes glittering the while, 'Blue Beard! Blue Beard! Black Beard!'"

CHAPTER IX.

LATER WORK AND DEATH.

ALTHOUGH, as has been said, this book is not intended for such as would be interested in close and technical criticism of Turner's work, nor even as a review of the productions of Turner's genius and skill, it would not be complete without some reference to the celebrated pictures of Venice. The story of Turner's life is, in fact, the story of his art. His life, apart from his art-productions, would not be worth the trouble of writing. It would, therefore, be unpardonable to omit notice of those pictures with which in the popular mind the name of Turner is more associated, perhaps, than any other, and about which in art circles so much controversy has raged.

When Turner first visited Venice is uncertain; but it was in 1833 that his first pictures of that "Queen of the Adriatic" were exhibited. These were the "Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace, and Custom House, Venice—Canaletti Painting," and the "Ducal Palace, Venice." From this time he continued, with intervals, to exhibit Venetian subjects till 1845.

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M. Henry Havard in his book on Amsterdam and Venice has several descriptions of the "floating city," made from different parts of view. If we take three or four of these the reader will be able better to understand Turner's enthusiasm for a city so unique in situation, architecture, and richness of colour, and also to appreciate his efforts to record what he saw, and what he imagined, of Venice, on canvas.

Venice from a Distance.—"Searching along the horizon, trying to penetrate the haze, we try to distinguish the marvellous city from the clouds in which she lies hidden. Suddenly above the green waters in front of the blue mountains whose feet are lost in the mist, we see her rise. She glitters in the midst of the islands that surround her. Her palaces of blue and white seem to float on the Adriatic. She reminds us of a necklace of pearls on a cloth of emerald velvet."

A Nearer View of Venice.—"The forms do not yet appear with clearness and precision; there are no exact outlines, nothing but patches of rose and white which are relieved against a blue horizon of an exquisite softness, and on the green waves which become silvery in the sunshine."

A Still Nearer View of Venice.—"As we approach, all this delighted chaos becomes less confused; the campaniles detach their delicate profiles and the domes their obesity; the lace-like balconies and oriental roofs of the palaces are cut out more

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clearly, the outlines are more plainly visible, but the tones remain unchanged. The city preserves her tints of white and rose, the sky and sea their tints of blue and green."

WITHIN THE CITY ITSELF.—"We see the great boats with their coloured sails, the stone quays, and the marble bridges, the red campaniles, the rose-coloured brickwork and the white marble, all close at hand. 'It is a marvellous concert of the richest colours, a clashing of the liveliest and most joyous tints.'"

It will be readily understood how such a city as is thus described would fascinate Turner, and become the "last home of his imagination." A "concert of the richest colours," and a "clashing of the liveliest and most joyous tints," are what he revelled in, and how fascinating to him were the different effects of light, as the city "glittered in the midst of the islands which surround her," and as "her palaces of blue and white seemed to float on the Adriatic," his Venetian pictures themselves reveal. Among these may be mentioned "Venice" exhibited in 1834; "Scene: A Street in Venice," exhibited in 1837; "Ducal Palace, Dogana, with Part of San Giorgio," exhibited in 1841; "The 'Sun of Venice' going to Sea," exhibited in 1843, to which were attached the lines—

"Fair shines the morn and soft the zephyrs blow a gale,
Venicia's fisher spreads his painted sail,
Nor heeds the demon that in grim repose
Expects his evening prey."

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In 1844 was exhibited the "Approach to Venice," to which in the catalogue the following lines referred—

> "The path lies o'er the sea, invisible;
> And from the land we went
> As to a floating city, steering in,
> And gliding up her streets as in a dream,
> So smoothly, silently."—Rogers' "*Italy*."

> "The moon is up, and yet it is not night,
> The sun as yet disputes the day with her."—Byron.

His last Venices Turner exhibited in 1845, when he had three, if not four, in the Royal Academy, two of them being "Venice—Noon," and "Venice—Sunset; a Fisher."

Perhaps none of Turner's pictures have been more fiercely criticised and condemned than his Venices, and perhaps none have been more highly praised. The following are examples. Says an unfavourable critic—

"Venice, well I have seen Venice. Venice, the magnificent, glorious, queenly, even in her decay—with her rich-coloured buildings, speaking of days gone by, reflected in the green water. What is Venice in this picture? A flimsy, whitewashed, meagre assemblage of architecture, starting off ghost-like into unnatural perspective, as if frightened at the affected blaze of some dogger vessels (the only attempt at richness in the picture). Not Venice, but the boat is the attractive object, and what is to make this rich? Nothing but some green and red, and yellow tinsel, which is so flimsy that it is now cracking . . .

"The greater part of the picture is white dis-

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agreeable white, without light or transparency; and the boats, with their red-worsted masts, are as gew-gaw as a child's toy, which he may have cracked to to see what it was made of. As to Venice, nothing can be more unlike its character."

Over against the foregoing may be placed the following from Mr. Ruskin:—

"But let us take Turner, the last and greatest step of all—thank Heaven we are in sunshine again—and what sunshine! Not the lurid, gloomy, plague-like oppression of Caneletti, but white flushing fulness of flashing light, which the waves drink, and the clouds breathe, bounding, and burning in intensity of joy. That sky—it is a very visible infinity—liquid, measureless, unfathomable, panting and melting through the chasms in the long fields of snow-white, flaked, slow-moving vapour, that guide the eye along the multitudinous waves down to the islanded rest of the Euganeum hills.

"Do we dream, or does the white forked sail drift nearer, and nearer yet, diminishing the blue sea between us with the fulness of its wings? It pauses now; but the quivering of its bright reflection troubles the shadows of the sea, those azure fathomless depths of crystal mystery, on which the swiftness of the poised gondola floats double, its black beak lifted like the crest of a dark ocean bird, its scarlet draperies flashed back from the kindling surface, and its bent oar breaking the radiant water into a dust of gold.

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Dreamlike and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea—pale ranks of motionless flame—their mighty towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager fire—their grey domes looming vast and dark, like eclipsed worlds—their sculptured arabesques and purple marble fading farther and fainter, league beyond league, lost in the light of distance. Detail after detail, thought beyond thought, you find and feel them through the radiant mystery, inexhaustible as indistinct, beautiful, but never all revealed; secret in fulness, confused in symmetry, as Nature herself is to the bewildered and foiled glance, giving out of that indistinctness and through that confusion the perpetual newness of the infinite and the beautiful. Yes, Mr. Turner, we are in Venice now!"

The conflict of opinion about Turner's pictures, we feel sure, is due to the fact that they have been looked at from different points of view, and judged of according to different canons of art. If art is something distinct from Nature, and if it is within its province, and an essential part of it, to idealise and create, then Turner was a great artist. If art is identical with the copying of Nature, and the artist must work strictly according to rule as to perspective and colouring, then Turner has transgressed and failed. The popular opinion, speaking in general terms, is in favour of the latter conclusion; the opinion of artists of the former.

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Illustrative of the effect which Turner's pictures have upon minds educated in art, the following story is told by Mr. Hamerton:—

"Some years ago several eminent French etchers came over to London for the purpose of executing plates from pictures in the National Gallery. They were all men of considerable experience in art, perfectly familiar with the old masters, and with as much modern art as may be seen in Paris; some of them were painters as well as etchers, and therefore practically acquainted with the use of oil colour. Thus prepared, and eager to make acquaintance with our national collection, they went to Trafalgar Square. It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect which the Turner pictures produced on their minds. It was not mere critical approbation, not merely the respectful attention given to a great master, it was the passionate enthusiasm with which highly educated and very sensitive persons acknowledge a new, strange, and irresistible influence in the fine arts, the sort of enthusiasm which was awakened by the verses of Byron, and the violin playing of Paganini. All these Frenchmen, whatever had been their previous speciality in art—whether they had been etchers of the figure, or of architecture, or of landscape—asked to be employed in the interpretation of Turner; and the pictures which they most desired to etch were not those of what has been considered his sober and sane, and orthodox time, but such things as the later

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Venices, and those daring experiments in light and colour which have so often been spoken of as little better than the freaks of a gifted madman. Here, then, is evidence, if all other evidence were wanting, that these pictures have the one great power of all genuine works of art, as distinguished from simple imitations of Nature, the power which excites and arouses the artistic susceptibilities."

One of the most famous pictures Turner ever painted, and that which many, if not most, capable judges considered to be his *chef d'œuvre*, is "The Fighting Téméraire, tugged to her last Berth to be broken up." The fine old ship was originally a French battleship, but was captured at the Battle of the Nile, and was made in future to do duty against her former owners. As the second ship in Collingwood's division she fought tremendously in the great Battle of Trafalgar. But ships, like men and systems, "have their day, and cease to be," as Turner in his pathetic picture reminds us. The way in which the painter had it suggested to his mind was as follows: "In 1838 Turner was with Stanfield and a party of brother artists on one of those holiday excursions in which he so delighted, probably to end with whitebait and champagne at Greenwich. It was at these times that Turner talked and joked his best, snatching now and then a moment to print on his quick brain some tone of sky, some gleam of water, some sprinkling light of oar, some glancing sunshine cross-barring a

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sail. Suddenly there moved down upon the artists' boat the grand old vessel that had been taken prisoner at the Nile, and that led the van at Trafalgar. She loomed through the evening haze pale and ghostly, as she was being towed to her last moorings at Deptford by a little, fiery, puny steam-tug. 'There's a fine subject, Turner,' said Stanfield. Accordingly Turner adopted it, and, as we all know, it proved to be one of his most poetical pictures."

According to Mr. Ruskin, the "Fighting Téméraire" was the last picture which Turner executed with his entire and perfect power. He claims that this marks the *end* of the central and best period of ten years in the artist's career, as the "Polyphemus" marked the beginning of it. If he is right, and as far as we know it has never been questioned, it is a coincidence which deserves to be mentioned, that the latter picture is a sunrise, and the former a sunset. With the artist himself the "Téméraire" was always a favourite, and, though he was offered tempting sums of money for it, he declined to sell it, placing it among the pictures he finally bequeathed to the nation. It can now be seen in the National Gallery, in London. The *Athenæum*, speaking of the "grand compass" of colour displayed in the picture, "from the broad horizontal vermilion splash, that is the core of the sunset, to the palest blue and pearl of the moon region," says, that it "needed a hundred-fingered man, and a ten-horse power of brain to attain it." It

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declares that "as a picture, it is the most glorious consummation of colouring ever painted by English fingers, or seen by English eyes;" that it is "the noblest English poem, founded on English scenery and English events, ever thrown on canvas;" and that "he who painted it, deserves a central seat in our wide Pantheon."

From the time of painting this picture Turner's powers gradually waned and decayed, till, in 1845, there came something like a collapse. After this indeed he painted no pictures which have not been severely criticised, and even ridiculed; though some of them, it must be added, have been most highly praised, especially by Mr. Ruskin. Among the praised ones we will simply mention the "Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying." Concerning this picture Mr. Ruskin says, "I think the noblest sea Turner has ever painted, and, if so, certainly the noblest ever painted by man, is that of the 'Slave Ship,' the chief Academy picture of the exhibition of 1840."

In 1851, on the 19th of December, the great solitary genius died, his decease taking place in a garret in a mean house, by the river side, at Chelsea, where, for some time, he had lived, quite unknown to his friends, under the name of "Mr. Booth." It was only the day before his decease that he was discovered there, and then his Queen Anne Street housekeeper found him out. In accordance with his own wish, he

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was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, where a costly monument to his memory may be seen.

The following account of his funeral appeared in one of the daily newspapers:—

"The mortal remains of the great artist who has just been removed from us, full of years and honours, were received within the walls of St. Paul's, and borne to their final resting-place in the catacombs. Whatever hesitation might have been felt by the mass of those who gazed on the later efforts of his brush in believing that he was entitled to the highest rank in his profession, none of his brethren seemed to have any doubt of his decided excellence, and the best of them all have ever readily admitted his superiority in poetry, feeling, fancy, and genius. Long ere his death he had the felicity of knowing that his name and his works were regarded with that reverential respect and estimation which are given to other artists by posterity alone, and his earlier productions have been placed among the classical ornaments of our choicest collections and galleries for many years. Even those who could only sneer and smile at the erratic blaze of his colour, shifting and flickering as the light of the aurora, lingered minute after minute before the last incomprehensible 'Turner' that gleamed on the walls of the Academy, and the first name sought for upon the catalogue by the critic, artist, and amateur, as well as by those who could not understand him when they found him, was his also.

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Many of the most distinguished of our painters, and many private friends, paid the last tribute of respect to his remains, and followed his hearse yesterday, and a long procession of mourning coaches and private carriages preceded it to the Cathedral.

"When the hearse arrived at the entrance to the Cathedral the coffin was received by the clergy, and the procession slowly stepped up the aisle—the singing boys, vicar's choral, vergers, minor canons, the Dean (Milman), the Archdeacon, the Ven. Hale Hale, the Canon Residentiary, and the Rev. Mr. Champneys being in attendance, and forming in front of the pall-bearers and mutes. The choristers chanted the "Dead March in Saul," and the organ pealed through the aisle as the coffin was borne into the chapel, where it was laid down while the Dean read the commencement of the service for the dead, after which it was raised; and while it was being carried towards the catacombs the rest of the service was performed according to the rubric, and at the conclusion the coffin was deposited in one of the vaults. It bore the simple inscription 'Joseph Mallord Turner, Esq., R.A., died December 19th, 1851, aged 79 years. A considerable crowd was attracted outside by the ceremonial, and about five hundred persons were present in the aisles and the chapel."

It should be noted that the statement of age in the inscription on the coffin was erroneous, as Turner, having been born in 1775, was in reality but seventy-

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six. The following lines by Mr. R. J. Lane, are on the Turner monument in St. Paul's, which is a statue by MacDowell :—

"'In habit as he lived' and wrought,
And listened as sweet Nature taught,
Turner in simple guise
Upon a rock observant stands ;
He pauses as the scene expands
In splendour to his eyes ;
Then glancing o'er the land, the sea,
Sets his creative fancy free.

"And as the sculptor's lofty reach
Aspires in metaphor to teach,
Thus in immortal stone,
MacDowell's ready wit suggests,
The rock on which great Turner rests,
Unshackled and alone."

CHAPTER X.

MENTAL AND MORAL EXCELLENCIES AND DEFECTS.

THE barber's son "died rich," leaving a fortune of £140,000. An artist friend informs the author that this large sum was partly made by Stock Exchange transactions. It is, of course, possible, and even probable, that Turner, like many others with money to invest and employ, bought and sold stocks and shares. It is possible that he did this to his advantage. But it is not necessary to believe that

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he did so in order to account for his realising a fortune so large. His works, even during his lifetime, fetched considerable sums of money, as much as a hundred and twenty guineas, according to a statement made by *The Times* in 1851, having, not unfrequently, been given for one of his small sketches in water-colours. His larger works in oil sold for hundreds of pounds each, and, as we have said, he is known to have refused £100,000 for the contents of his Queen Anne Street Gallery on one occasion. Then it must be borne in mind that Turner knew remarkably well how to take care of money. He may even be said to have been parsimonious, living meanly and scraping, and hoarding incessantly.

Illustrative of his meanness in money matters, the story is told that a friend of Sir Thomas Lawrence's, who resided at Clapham Common, commissioned the amiable President of the Academy to order of Turner a picture at a most liberal price. When it was finished both Sir Thomas and Turner were invited to dinner to see to its proper hanging; but the former was summoned to Windsor on the appointed day. Turner, however, arrived with the picture, which was greatly admired. After dinner, when the ladies had retired, the gentleman, noticing, as he thought, the artist's uneasiness, said—

"We will now to business. Excuse me for a moment while I write you a cheque."

The cheque was written and handed to Turner;

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but instead of putting it into his pocket, he kept turning it over, eyeing first the gentleman and then the cheque. Apprehensive of error, the gentleman now observed—

"I have made it guineas, I believe? It was to be guineas; was it not?"

"Yes, the guineas are right enough," was the reply; "but I paid six shillings for the coach, and that's not down!"

On one occasion when making one of his continental tours he met a well-known water-colour painter on the Moselle, and fraternised with him. He then invited him to dinner, at which there was no stint. The time to separate at length came, and the comrades exchanged friendly good nights. The next morning the weaker vessel rose late. On leaving his room his first inquiry was if Monsieur Turner had gone out sketching yet. "Left for good at five o'clock this morning," was the reply, "and said you would settle both the bills." This has been described as a "rough practical joke," but, even if that interpretation be put upon it, it must be said that probably Turner enjoyed it all the more because it enabled him to evade a demand upon his pocket.

Mr. John Murray, Byron's publisher, once met Turner in the Tyrol, and he has related, apparently, how, when, there, the great artist had much court paid to him by a small official of the neighbourhood who had a taste for painting. A carriage was

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obtained, and away went the professional and the amateur to visit every rock worth seeing as a point of view in the valley of the Inn. Who engaged the carriage we are not told, but Turner was very careful to let his companion pay for the hire.

How unscrupulously grasping he could be sometimes is painfully shewn in a dispute he had with Mr. Cooke, one of his engravers, who in a letter to him combating an unfair demand in reference to the "Southern Coast," says—

"On Saturday last, to my utter astonishment, you declared in my print-rooms, before three persons, who distinctly heard it, as follows:—'I will have my terms, or I will oppose the work by doing another *Coast.*' These were the words you used, and every one must allow them to be a threat. And this morning (Monday) you show me a note of my own handwriting, with these words (or words to this immediate effect): 'The drawings for the future *Coast* shall be paid twelve guineas and a half each.'

"Now, in the name of common honesty, how can you apply the above note to any drawings for the first division of the work called the *Southern Coast*, and tell me I owe you guineas on each of those drawings? Did you not agree to make the whole of the South Coast drawings at £7 10s. each? And did I not continue to pay you that sum for the first four numbers? When a meeting of the partners took place to take into consideration the great exertions

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that myself and brother had made on the plates, to testify their entire satisfaction, and considering the difficulties I had placed myself in by such an agreement as I had made (dictated by my enthusiasm for the welfare of a work which had been planned and executed with so much zeal, and of my being paid the small sum only of twenty-five guineas for each plate, including the loan of the drawings, for which I received no return or consideration whatever on the part of the shareholders), they unanimously (excepting on your part), and very liberally, increased the price of each plate to £40; and I agreed, on my part, to pay you ten guineas for each drawing after the fourth number. And have I not kept this agreement? Yes, you have received from me, and from Messrs. Arch on my account, the whole sum so agreed upon, and for which you have given me and them receipts. The work has now been finished upwards of six months, when you show me a note of my own handwriting; and which was written to you in reply to a part of your letter, where you say, 'Do you imagine I shall go to John o'Groat's House for the same sum I received for the southern part?' Is this *fair* conduct between man and man—to apply the note (so explicit in itself) to the former work, and to endeavour to make me believe I still owe you two guineas and a half on each drawing? Why, let me ask, should I promise you such a sum? What possible motive could I have in heaping gold into your pockets, when

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you have always taken such special care of your interests, even in the case of 'Neptune's Trident,' which I can declare you *presented* to me; and in the spirit of this understanding I presented it again to Mrs. Cooke. You may recollect afterwards charging me two guineas for the loan of it, and requesting me at the same time to return it to you, which has been done."

Is it surprising, when Turner could do such things as Mr. Cooke pretty conclusively convicts him of, that he should have got for himself a not very good name among those with whom he did business, especially the engravers and publishers? An excellent story is told of one of the latter, who wrote him a letter of introduction to a brother publisher in Yorkshire, when the artist went thither to make his drawings for Whitaker's "History of Richmondshire." "Above all things, remember," wrote he, "that Turner is a great Jew." The intimation was taken literally, and, as the next day happened to be Sunday, the publisher, signifying after breakfast his departure to church, expressed a hope that Turner would amuse himself with the books and pictures till he returned. The latter was somewhat nettled at being so obviously treated as a pagan, but preserved silence on the subject. On the dinner-table, however, later on, appeared an unlucky and *mal-à-propos* ham, and the host began to apologise for it. "What on earth do you mean, sir?" demanded Turner. "Why, they wrote to me that you were a Jew," explained the

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perplexed host, in reply. What followed deponent saith not.

His parsimony, selfishness, loose habits, and, latterly, his undue love of wine, were grievous defects in the great man's character. On these it is no pleasure to dwell, though faithfulness demands that they should be mentioned. Let us now turn to some other traits of his character which are more pleasing to contemplate.

There was a certain impulsive generosity in his nature which occasionally manifested itself, and which seems to say that his real and original nature was to be generous, and that the selfishness, which has been so much condemned in him, was super-induced by the training which his thrifty father gave him, and to his failure, through disappointed love, to form those family ties and relationships which are its best correctives.

It is related of him, for example, that one of his early patrons, who had bought some of his drawings when he was an obscure barber's son, working in his murky bedroom in Maiden Lane, in course of time became involved, and directed his steward to cut down some valuable timber on the estate to relieve the pressure. As soon as Turner, who was now a famous and wealthy man, heard of this, his generous impulses were stirred, and gratefulness for long-past kindness was re-excited. Shaking off his habitual parsimony, he forthwith wrote to the steward, sending

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the sum required, amounting to some thousands of pounds, and enjoining upon him secrecy as to the sender. In course of time the affairs of the gentleman rallied, and the entire sum was repaid through the steward, who kept the secret strictly.

There is good authority, too, for the statement that a poor woman once interrupted his day's painting by teasing him with a begging petition; whereupon, he roughly chid her and dismissed her. Before, however, she had got to the hall-door he relented, ran after her, and presented her with a five-pound note —no small sum for a careful, thrifty man to give away on a sudden impulse.

The death of a drawing master deeply affected him, and, as the widow was in need, he, out of regard for the memory of his old friend, her deceased husband, lent her various sums of money, till the total was considerable. Fortune, however, favoured the exertions of the poor woman, and she waited upon Turner for the purpose of repaying the borrowed money. He resolutely kept his hands in his pockets and refused to take it, desiring her to apply the amount to the education of her children.

He was much attached to his own profession and to the members of it. He never spoke in disparagement of his brother artists, but was always friendly and just towards them. Here is a pleasing example of his kindness to young artists, with whom, in their struggles, he had a strong fellow-feeling.

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When Bird, the son of a Wolverhampton clothier, first sent a picture to the Royal Academy, Turner was one of the "Hanging Committee," all the members of which declared the work of the new man to have merit, but all, with one exception, declared also that it could not be hung for want of space. That exception was Turner. He growled out his dissent, and insisted that the young man's picture "must have a place." The other Royal Academicians stolidly content themselves, inasmuch as *their* pictures were all hung—like passengers in a railway train, who do not wish to put themselves to a little trouble to accommodate a new-comer—by declaring there was "no room." While they joked and talked, Turner turned again to the picture and gave it a severe scrutiny, and then, in generous recognition of its merits, he shouted with emphasis, "We must find a place for this young man's picture!" "Impossible!" was the response. Turner said no more, but quietly removed one of his own pictures and hung up Bird's in its place.

Mr. Hart, R.A., has furnished an excellent example of Turner's readiness to assist the young and unknown with generous hints and friendly counsel. As a young man, he had sent to the Academy a clever representation of "Galileo in the Dungeon of the Inquisition." It was a picture of merit, betraying more than usual thoughtfulness on the part of the young painter, and pointing a fine moral of the mistaken zeal and persecuting fury of the representa-

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tives of the Christian religion in those days, and of the injury that is done when Religion steps out of her own proper sphere and meddlesomely pronounces upon questions concerning which it is not within her province to teach. Turner was pleased with it, and expressed his approval in a marked manner. After looking at the picture for a short time he swept in, with a twirl or two of his brush, some concentric spheres upon the prison wall. The operation was a brief one; but its value it does not require a trained and practised artist to perceive. Those simple circles, it is said, were worth twenty guineas to the young aspirant, and we can well believe that they had a value for him beyond that of money. As a further instance of his unselfish recognition of the merit of others, it may be related that on being told that Calcott had painted one of his finest scenes on the Thames, on commission, for two hundred pounds, he observed, in the presence of several of the fine-art patrons of that day: "Had I been deputed to set a value on that picture, I should have awarded a thousand pounds."

There is another story, which is so good that it must not be omitted here. It goes beyond those just related in the illustration of that trait of Turner's character to which attention has been directed, for it exhibits him not only as generous, but as self-sacrificing. His picture of "Cologne" was exhibited in 1826, and was hung between two portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence: one of Lady Wallscourt, the other

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of Lady Robert Manners. The sky of Turner's picture being exceeding bright, it had a most injurious effect on the colour of the two portraits, and Sir Thomas, naturally feeling mortified, complained openly of the position. At that time, it should be explained, artists were permitted to retouch their pictures on the walls of the Academy. At a private view on the morning of the day when the exhibition was opened, a gentleman who had seen Turner's picture in all its glory led a group of expectant critics up to it. It had undergone such a change that he started back from it in consternation and disappointment; the golden sky had turned to a dun colour. He ran up to the artist, who was in another part of the room, exclaiming, "Turner, Turner! what have you done to your picture?"

"Oh!" said Turner, in an undertone, "poor Lawrence was so unhappy! It's only lampblack. It'll all wash off after the exhibition." The meaning of this was that he had passed a wash of lampblack in water-colour over the sky, and so for the time utterly spoiled his picture, because its unveiled splendour would have had an injurious effect upon the pictures of his neighbour. Such unselfish generosity one likes to think of in Turner.

One of the best "counter-stories" relates to Constable, for whom Turner had not much love. The story is told by Leslie, in his "Autobiographical Recollections," and is as follows:—"In 1832, when

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Constable exhibited his 'Opening of Waterloo Bridge,' it was placed in the School of Painting—one of the small rooms at Somerset House. A sea piece by Turner was next to it—a grey picture, beautiful and true, but with no positive colour in any part of it. Constable's 'Waterloo' seemed as if painted with liquid gold and silver, and Turner came several times into the room while he was heightening, with vermilion and lake, the decorations and flags of the city barges. Turner stood behind him looking from the 'Waterloo' to his own picture, and at last brought his palette from the great room, where he was touching another picture, and putting a round daub of red lead, somewhat bigger than a shilling, on his grey sea, went away without saying a word. The intensity of the red lead, made more vivid by the coolness of the picture, caused even the vermilion and lake of Constable to look weak. I came into the room just as Turner left it. 'He has been here,' said Constable, 'and fired a gun.' On the opposite wall was a picture, by Jones, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace. 'A coal,' said Cooper, 'has bounced across the room from Jones's picture and set fire to Turner's sea.' The great man did not come into the room for a day and a half; and then, in the last moments that were allowed for painting, he glazed the seal he had put on his picture and shaped it into a buoy."

But though Turner had not much love for

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Constable he could do him a kindness when occasion arose. The latter was one day pacing impatiently before a picture, the effect of which somehow or other did not please him. It was true to the canons of art, and yet he was conscious that there was something wanting. There was a stroke too little or too much, something deficient or redundant; but what it was he could not tell. Just then Turner came in. "I say, Turner," cried Constable, "there is something wrong in this picture, and I cannot for the life of me tell what it is. You give it a look." Turner looked at the picture steadily for a few moments, then seizing a brush he struck in a ripple of water in the foreground. This was the thing that was wanted, and the picture was now complete.

For his profession Turner had an undying enthusiasm; without this enthusiasm, genius as he was, he would never have become such a master as he is acknowledged to have been. An admirable anecdote illustrative of it has been given by the Rev. Charles Kingsley:—

"I had taken my mother and a cousin," he writes, "to see Turner's pictures; and, as my mother knows nothing about art, I was taking her down the gallery to look at the large 'Richmond Park;' but as we were passing the 'Snow Storm' she stopped before it, and I could hardly get her to look at any other picture; and she told me a great deal more about it than I had any notion of, though I have seen many

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snow-storms. She had been in such a scene on the coast of Holland during the war. When, some time afterwards, I thanked Turner for his permission for her to see the pictures, I told him that he would not guess what had caught my mother's fancy, and then named the picture; but he said—'I did not paint it to be understood, but I wished to show what such a scene was like. I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it. I was lashed for four hours, and I did not expect to escape; but I felt bound to record it if I did!'"

The story certainly reveals the great artist in his most heroic mood, forgetful both of danger and discomfort in the pursuit of his art. Turner lashed to the mast in a snow-storm, taking notes, would make a fine subject for one of Turner's successors in art to try his hand upon.

Turner's kindness to the members of his profession has already been referred to. Further evidence of it may be found in the fact that he founded, or at all events assisted to found, the "Artists' General Benevolent Fund," a society which sought to assist poor artists and their widows and orphans when the husbands and fathers were deceased. He also, many years before he died, projected a scheme for giving assistance to decayed members of his profession, and directed by his will that "A Charitable Institution be founded for the maintenance and support of Poor and Decayed Male Artists being

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born in England and of English parents only, and lawful issue." But Turner made his own will, and has given a fresh illustration of the folly of being "every man his own lawyer." He was not remarkably clever at making known his meaning through the medium of language, especially written language, but was most obscure and involved in style. It is true that he could not beat the lawyers in this latter respect; but then, although not readily understood by others, their involved legal verbiage is understood among themselves; whereas a will written in plain, straightforward English they are apt to interpret in a way very different from what the testator meant, and different from that in which everybody else would understand it. The consequence was that Turner's project, upon which it would seem he had so much set his heart, fell through, and the Charitable Institution, to be called "Turner's Gift," has never existed except in the brain of its projector.

Reference has been made once or twice in the course of this work to Turner's incorrect spelling and bad grammar. His deficiencies in these respects were most marked, and, considering the powers of mind which he, beyond all question, possessed, they are most surprising. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that, apparently, he could not think clearly, or express himself, at least in writing, shortly and intelligibly. His confusedness of thought and involution of style are something wonderful.

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Turner had a great notion of being a poet, and all his life long he seems to have beguiled his leisure by efforts at verse. Mr. Hamerton says, "It might be possible, indeed, if it were worth the expense, to make up a small volume of Turnerian poetry, which might bear, as a motto, on its title-page one line of the poet himself—

'Lead me along with thy *armonuous* verse.'

Such a volume would contain some of the most remarkable specimens of grammar, spelling, and construction that could be offered as exercises for correction to little boys at school."

Among other examples he gives the following:—

"Hill after hill incessant cheats the eye,
While *each* the intermediate space *deny*."

"To form the snares for lobsters armed in mail,
But *man* more cunning over this *prevail*."

"The floating seaweed to the eye appears,
And, by the waving medium, *seamen steers*."

"Have we not soil *sufficient* rich?"

"Where atmospheric *contraries doth* dwell."

The spelling is better than the grammatical construction; indeed, very much better, as Mr. Hamerton remarks, than one might expect from the author of such "armonuous verse;" it is only here and there that one finds an error in spelling, whereas in the poet's syntax they abound. It was one of the great man's weaknesses to attach snatches of his verse to

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the titles of his pictures in the Academy catalogue, particularly from a poem, which he kept by him in manuscript, called "The Fallacies of Hope." "In 1800," says Mr. Ruskin, "some not very promising 'Anon.' lines were attached to 'Views of Dolbadern and Carnarvon Castles.' Akenside and Ossian were next laid under contribution. Then Ovid, Callimachus, and Homer. At last, in 1812, the 'Fallacies of Hope' begin, *à propos* of 'Hannibal's Crossing the Alps;' and this poem continues to be the principal text-book, with occasional recurrences to Thomson, one passage from Scott, and several from Byron."

But Turner was a poet, nevertheless; he had a powerful insight into Nature, true poetic sentiment, and a strong and vivid imagination; but he lacked expression, except by means of his brush upon canvas. As Mr. Cyrus Redding says, "He was truly the poet of painting." His greatest power is seen in the light effects which he has displayed in his pictures, particularly those which he painted in his prime. In a recently published book, by M. Chesneau, on "The English School of Painting," this French author says: "Turner's one dream, the extraordinarily high aspiration of his life, was to gain a complete knowledge of light in all its phases. . . . He has attempted and mastered every enchanting effect, intricacy, and radiance of light, although at times he has been sorely baffled. From the pale gleams of twilight and grey dawn, breaking in the east over the dark earth, to the

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dazzling rays of the setting sun firing the restless waves, it is one unbroken series of marvels: Venetian views, English coasts, cathedrals, castles, forests, mountains, peaceful lakes, stormy seas, ships in distress, naval battles, fleets in full sail, the seashore at low tide, interiors, reception halls, anatomical and ornithological studies, animals, architecture—both genuine and fanciful—plants, insects, and flowers—it is a perfect fairyland—a world in which transplendent reality and ardent fancy are blended and interwoven into a harmonious whole, teeming with life and movement."

So much for Turner's art. As to his character and mode of life, they were avowedly defective, and must be pointed to by way of warning rather than incitement to imitation. Still, he had some great qualities, as is witnessed to by Mr. Ruskin, who knew him personally, and says, "He had a heart as intensely kind and as nobly true as God ever gave to one of His creatures. . . . Having known Turner for ten years, and that during the period of his life when the brightest qualities of his mind were in many respects diminished, and when he was suffering most from the evil-speaking of the world, I never heard him say one depreciating word of living man or man's work. I never saw him look an unkind or blameful look. I never saw him let pass, without some sorrowful remonstrance, or endeavour at mitigation, a blameful word spoken by another. Of no man but Turner whom I have ever known could I say

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this; and of this kindness and truth came, I repeat, all his highest power; and all his failure and error, deep and strange, came of his faithlessness."

Turner was a great man, and worthy of a high place among the most distinguished artists. He and such as he of English name and great achievements remind our youth, and the youth of the entire English-speaking world, that they have a great heritage. May they be enabled the more to realise this, the privileges it confers, and the responsibilities it entails, by a perusal of this brief study of the life and work of The Poet-Laureate of English Art!

(*Our Portrait is from a Sketch by Sir John Gilbert.*)

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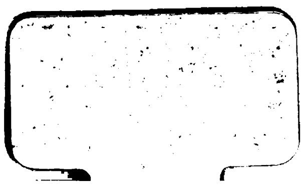

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